

# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

## **Monterey, California**



## **THESIS**

**JAPAN, RUSSIA AND THE “NORTHERN TERRITORIES”  
DISPUTE: NEIGHBORS IN SEARCH OF A GOOD FENCE**

by

Gregory L. Morris

September, 2002

Thesis Advisors:

Mikhail Tsypkin  
Douglas Porch

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> September 2002	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE:</b> Japan, Russia And The "Northern Territories" Dispute: Neighbors In Search Of A Good Fence			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b> n/a	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> LT Gregory L. Morris, USN				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  <p>Russo-Japanese relations are held hostage by a group of four islands just north of Hokkaido. This thesis attempts to answer whether the dispute may be solved, and what is necessary for resolution. The argument is made that the islands have little strategic or material value of themselves, but symbolically they are of great value to both Russia and Japan. Public opinion and domestic politics in both countries drives the debate and is the reason for the stalemate, as there is almost no room for negotiators to work with. There is increased cooperation and better relations between Japan and Russia, and both countries recognize benefits that would come about if the territorial dispute was resolved. However, because the issue is swathed in pride and symbolism, resolution in the near term is unlikely unless an external stimulus provides an incentive to change the paradigm upon which Russo-Japanese relations are based.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> JAPAN—FOREIGN RELATIONS—RUSSIA (FEDERATION); JAPAN—FOREIGN RELATIONS—1638-; JAPAN—FOREIGN RELATIONS—SOVIET UNION; SOVIET UNION—FOREIGN RELATIONS—JAPAN; KURIL ISLANDS (RUSSIA); NORTHERN TERRITORIES; NORTHEAST ASIAN SECURITY; JAPAN—BOUNDARIES—RUSSIA (FEDERATION)			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 120	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UL	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**JAPAN, RUSSIA AND THE “NORTHERN TERRITORIES” DISPUTE:  
NEIGHBORS IN SEARCH OF A GOOD FENCE**

Gregory L. Morris  
Lieutenant, United States Navy  
B.A., University of Virginia, 1996

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
September 2002**

Author: Gregory L. Morris

Approved by: Mikhail Tsypkin  
Thesis Co-Advisor

Douglas Porch  
Thesis Co-Advisor

James Wirtz  
Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

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## **ABSTRACT**

Russo-Japanese relations are held hostage by a group of four islands just north of Hokkaido. This thesis attempts to answer whether the dispute may be solved, and what is necessary for resolution. The argument is made that the islands have little strategic or material value of themselves, but symbolically they are of great value to both Russia and Japan. Public opinion and domestic politics in both countries drives the debate and is the reason for the stalemate, as there is almost no room for negotiators to work with. There is increased cooperation and better relations between Japan and Russia, and both countries recognize benefits that would come about if the territorial dispute was resolved. However, because the issue is swathed in pride and symbolism, resolution in the near term is unlikely unless an external stimulus provides an incentive to change the paradigm upon which Russo-Japanese relations are based.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>APEC</b>	Asian Pacific Economic Conference
<b>CCP</b>	Chinese Communist Party
<b>CER</b>	Chinese Eastern Railway
<b>DPRK</b>	Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (North Korea)
<b>ERINA</b>	Economic Research Institute of Northeast Asia
<b>EEZ</b>	Exclusive Economic Zone
<b>FBIS</b>	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
<b>FDNF</b>	Forward Deployed Naval Forces (United States)
<b>FPS</b>	Russian Federal Border Service
<b>FEC</b>	Far Eastern Commission
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>JDA</b>	Japan Defense Agency
<b>JGSDF</b>	Japan Ground Self Defense Force
<b>JIIA</b>	Japan Institute for International Affairs
<b>JMSDF</b>	Japan Maritime Self Defense Force
<b>JSDF</b>	Japan Self Defense Forces
<b>LDP</b>	Liberal Democratic Party
<b>MOFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NHK</b>	Japanese public Television
<b>NIDS</b>	National Institute for Defense Studies
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>PECC</b>	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
<b>PfP</b>	Partnership for Peace
<b>PJC</b>	NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council
<b>PLA</b>	Peoples' Liberation Army (China)
<b>POW</b>	Prisoner Of War
<b>PRC</b>	Peoples' Republic of China
<b>ROK</b>	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
<b>SLBM</b>	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
<b>SLOC</b>	Sea Lines Of Communication
<b>SSBN</b>	Nuclear Ballistic Missile Submarine
<b>SSN</b>	Nuclear Attack Submarine
<b>START</b>	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
<b>UNCLOS</b>	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people whose assistance was invaluable and who I would like to thank for their contributions to this work.

I would especially like to thank Professor Tsuneo Akaha of the Monterey Institute of International Affairs, one of the premier scholars in Russo-Japanese relations, who took substantial amounts of his personal time to assist me. The many conversations we had and the guidance he gave me set the direction of this thesis. I am also deeply indebted to my thesis advisors, Professors Douglas Porch and Mikhail Tsypkin. Professor Tsypkin was kind and patient enough to listen to me think aloud during many visits to his office while I was trying to find a new and interesting topic. Professor Porch went far above the call of duty with his assistance to me during his travel quarter. I could not have asked for a better team of advisors.

Much of this thesis would have probably been much different had Joe Flanz of the American Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, not taken his personal time to guide me through the Embassy. Without him, I could never have met my contacts at the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) and the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), both in Tokyo, Japan. Also, I would like to thank COL David Rann, USMC, CAPT Tetsuichi Kawakami, JMSDF, Hideaki Noguchi, Shigeo Kikuchi, and Takeshi Yuasa. There are several others who lent me invaluable assistance, and who I would like to thank by name, but for their own reasons prefer to remain anonymous. They all lent me their valuable time and took personal interest in my research. Without them all I could not have gained much of my information or perspective.

This section could not be complete if I did not also thank my fiancée, Yuka Sugiura, who worked hard to get me information from many organizations in Japan regarding the Northern Territories issue, as well as providing invaluable emotional support and acting as my own personal cheerleader during the times I was struggling with one chapter or another.

Finally, I would like to thank my father and mother for their love and support for all my academic endeavors. You have both believed in me when I did not. Thank you.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than half a century, Russia and Japan have not been able to sign a final peace treaty ending World War II and fully normalize the relations between the two states. The reason for this abnormal state of relations is a dispute over four materially and strategically insignificant islands that were seized by Soviet forces in the last days of World War II. These four islands are Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai Islets, a group of tiny islands commonly referred to as Habomai or the Habomais. They are known collectively to the Japanese as the Northern Territories and to the Russians as the Southern Kurils. The islands extend outwards from the Cape Nosappu on the north east tip of Hokkaido; the closest of the Habomais is 3.7 km away and Etorofu is the farthest at 144.5 km. In the Soviet Japanese Declaration of 1956 that normalized relations, the Japanese were promised Shikotan and the Habomai Islets upon the conclusion of a peace treaty. Though relations between Japan and Russia have gone through good and bad periods, there has been no substantial progress in real terms since the 1956 declaration.

The reason for the dispute can be found in domestic factors in both Russia and Japan that have their roots in the earliest contacts between the two peoples. The Russo-Japanese War was the first major defining moment, as the mutual images put forth through propaganda during that conflict can still be seen in current mutual perceptions between Japanese and Russians. The second defining moment in mutual relations was World War II, when the islands were seized by Soviet forces. The symbolic value of the islands was largely established at that point, as the Russians felt the humiliation of the Russo-Japanese War had been overcome, and the Japanese felt aggrieved that “inherent territory” of Japan was taken from them. The symbolism continues today, and is exploited by nationalists in both countries as an easy, emotional issue. Public opinion on the issue in both countries has remained firm, and gives negotiators little leeway with which to work towards resolution of the territorial dispute.

Relations have progressed between the two countries since the last days of the Soviet Union, and regional economic integration has slowly begun, as Russian fishermen

now sell most of their catch to the Japanese. However, poaching, mutually depressed economies, environmental problems and fisheries depletion have become significant problems in the Russian Far East and Hokkaido. Japanese investment in the Russian Far East remains low, partially because of the Northern Territories issue and partially because of the better investment climate in China, Korea and South East Asia. Russian and Japanese priorities in the region remain different as each is more focused on bilateral relations with China and stability on the Korean Peninsula than on their relations with each other.

For Russia and Japan to resolve their dispute, there will likely need to be a strong external stimulus that changes the entire paradigm of their relations and forces them into a closer relationship. Three scenarios are offered as possibilities: first, a hostile, unstable, but more powerful China; second, a significant curtailment of Persian Gulf oil through war; and third, full Russian membership in NATO. Although these are examples of events that may change Russo-Japanese relations, the overall prognosis remains bleak. A far more likely outcome is indefinite stalemate or increased Japanese apathy. However, any resolution that does not either fully or substantially meet Japanese demands may result in continued irredentism, Japanese refusal to invest in the Russian Far East, and no possibility for a regional cooperative security regime or organization such as the OSCE in Europe. Stability and security in the region could be affected in the long term if relations are not fully normalized between these two major powers.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. A TANTALIZING QUESTION**

Officially, the Second World War is not over between Japan and Russia. Although the guns have long been silent, 57 years after the Japanese surrendered unconditionally to the Allies, there is still no peace treaty between Russia and Japan. This abnormal state of relations has been perpetuated by a conflict over four small islands – Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and Habomai – seized by Soviet forces after Japan’s official surrender onboard the battleship USS Missouri. Origins of this dispute predate the 1867 Meiji Restoration. The factors that contribute most to the ongoing dispute are conflicting interpretations of history, opposing cultural views of territory, the Cold War which undermined attempts to resolve the dispute, economic differences and domestic politics in Russia and Japan.

The definition of the “Kuril Islands” has been one of the most contentious issues between the Japanese and Russians. This is because the Japanese officially renounced sovereignty over the “Kuril Islands” in the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty. What is generally known as the Kuril Island chain corresponds roughly to the “Chīshima Rettō” or “Thousand Islands” for the Japanese. The Japanese now explicitly define the “Kuril Islands” as beginning north of Etorofu and extending to Cape Lopatka on the Kamchatka Peninsula. For the Russians, “Kuril Islands” designates the string of islands running from Cape Lopatka to the tip of Kunashiri, just off the coast of Shibetsu, Hokkaido. The Habomai Islets, a group of six tiny islands, and Shikotan Island are collectively known as the “Lesser Kurils.” The Japanese consider those islands to be an extension of Cape Nosappu on Hokkaido.

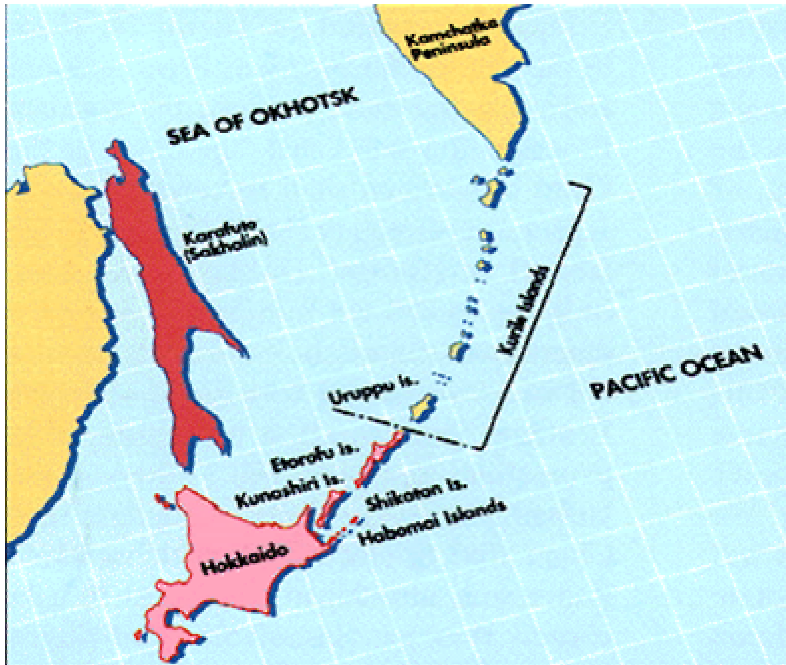
### **B. WHAT ARE THE “NORTHERN TERRITORIES?”**

The “Northern Territories,” or “Hoppo Ryōdo” in Japanese, refer to the four “islands” closest to Japan. These are Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai Islets.<sup>1</sup> Of the islands, Etorofu is the largest with an area of 3,184 km<sup>2</sup> and also has the

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity, the Japanese names of the islands will be used throughout as these are the more commonly accepted names used by scholars and cartographers. The Habomais, although consisting of six tiny islands, will be referred to as one island, as this is the collective name for all six islands, none of which

largest population at approximately 8,190. Kunashiri is next in size with an area of 1,499 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of approximately 5,500. Shikotan is the smallest of the settled islands with an area of 253 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of approximately 2,450. The Habomais



**Figure 1: The “Northern Territories” (From: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), “Japan’s Northern Territories.”)**

contain a total area of 100 km<sup>2</sup> and are uninhabited except for a small garrison of border guards. Altogether, the population of all the islands as of 2001 was approximately 16,140 ethnic Russians. In 1994 the region was rocked by a series of major earthquakes that destroyed most of the canneries on

the islands, which led to a large-scale exodus of people from the islands.

Before the earthquake and accompanying tsunami, the population was approximately 25,400 Russians.<sup>2</sup> To put the islands in perspective, Etorofu by itself is much larger than Okinawa.<sup>3</sup> While the islands amount to an insignificant percentage of the Russian Federation, taken together they would be larger than 19 of Japan’s 47 prefectures.

### **C. RELEVANCE, PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION**

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the circumstances surrounding the final unresolved conflict between Japan and Russia dating from World War II. Russia and Japan are now the only two major powers with global influence in the world that do not

have the name “Habomai,” and this corresponds to common usage.

<sup>2</sup> “Do you know about Japan’s Northern Territories? The Northern Territories Issue.” Pamphlet published by the Hokkaido Government Northern Territories Countermeasures Headquarters, Sapporo, Japan.; Hiroshi Kimura. “Islands Apart.” *Look Japan*, February 2001 [cited April 22, 2002], available at [www.lookjapan.com/Lbcoverstory/01FebCS.htm](http://www.lookjapan.com/Lbcoverstory/01FebCS.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>3</sup> “Our half century long appeal for Justice,” pamphlet published in Japanese, Russian and English.

have normalized relations. Among Russian scholars, the Kuril issue is often relegated to a single paragraph or even a footnote in historical reports.<sup>4</sup> Most scholarship on the Kuril dispute is limited to a select group of Japan-Russia specialists. Outside that group, little is known or understood about the origins of the dispute or the impact this issue has on Russo-Japanese relations.

Japan's importance to the world has steadily increased while that of Russia has been in precipitous decline. Formally eschewing military power, Japan has enacted a very successful form of "dollar diplomacy" through foreign aid. Despite a ten year long economic recession, Japan still has the world's second largest economy and has quietly rebuilt its military power.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese Self-Defense Forces are the third strongest military in Asia after the United States and China, and second only to the United States in terms of modernity. Although limited in missions to national self-defense, there has been some call for revision of the constitution that forbids Japan from operating its forces outside of the region surrounding the main islands.

The relations between Japan and Russia are of concern not just to the nations along the Pacific Rim, but the world as well. How relations develop (or fail to develop) between Russia and Japan may have profound implications for East Asian security. Japan is the strongest U.S. ally in the region, playing host to the Forward Deployed Naval Forces, which include the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63), as well as numerous Army posts, Air Force bases and a large contingent of Marines stationed on Okinawa. Russia, though in decline, is strategically important to U.S. interests based on its wide ranging and conflict-ridden borders, its arsenal of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, and its capability to be a great force for either stability or instability in the future. It is in

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(City of Nemuro, Hokkaido, Japan: n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> For example. Adam Ulam mentions the Kurils only 3 times in his seminal Cold War text, *Expansion and Coexistence*. Hedrick Smith, Thomas Remington and Martin Malia do not mention them at all in books written generally about Russia or the Soviet Union. Robert Wesson, Alvin Rubenstein and R. Craig Nation, authors of works on Soviet and Russian foreign policy, mention the islands only in passing.

<sup>5</sup> Officially the Japan Self Defense Forces (JSDF) are not a "military" as defined by the West, because the possession of a regular army, navy or air force is expressly forbidden by Article 9 of Japan's 1946 Constitution. The term "military" is used here for the benefit of American and Western readers for simplicity. The author recognizes that most Japanese do not consider the JSDF as a military in the conventional sense, but those forces that are required as a bare minimum for the defense of the Japanese home islands.

the interests of the United States to see this conflict resolved peacefully to ensure continued stability in the East Asian region.

The intended audience for this thesis is primarily U.S. policy makers and officials that may serve in either Russia or the East Asian region. In the process, the goal of this work is to add new knowledge and a new perspective to the general scholarship concerning the dispute. The purpose of the thesis is to determine the effect of the territorial dispute on Russo-Japanese relations and to assess the prospects of resolution. The following secondary questions are also addressed: What is the origin of the territorial dispute; what role do domestic factors play within the dispute; and what are the security implications for Russia and East Asia. The hypothesis of this thesis is that, whatever the rhetoric, the actual resolution of the dispute is not a high priority among the policy makers in either Russia or Japan despite the fact that the ongoing dispute over the Kurils limits the amount of cooperation possible and precludes the signing of a final peace treaty.

Chapter II offers a brief history of the territorial dispute to include the nature of the claims of each party to the islands. While it is not possible to do justice to the intricate nature of many of the arguments, this chapter endeavors to cover the major events leading to the dispute. Emphasis will be placed on showing the transition from early cordial relations between the two countries to the state of near-constant conflict that has characterized Russo-Japanese relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The United States has also played a role in fostering and maintaining the conflict. Therefore the U.S. role will also be addressed.

Chapter III discusses the material and political value of the islands to Japan and Russia. Strategic and economic considerations are occasionally given by commentators as being the real reasons for either retaining or claiming the islands. The chapter will seek to show that while these are valid concerns, current developments show clearly that the Kurils have only limited strategic and economic value. Politics, driven by domestic political considerations keeps the Kurils in the forefront of Russo-Japanese relations.

Chapter IV focuses on the way the media, domestic politics, and public opinion affect the dispute and constrain diplomatic resolution. One argument of this thesis is that

the dispute has become mostly symbolic. Emotion must be taken out of the Kuril issue before the territorial dispute may be settled. The nature of those emotional issues will be considered, as well as the national myths deliberately created and nurtured among the two populations to keep the passion high. National myths play a pivotal role, as they blind populations to rational arguments and an objective assessment of national interests.

Chapter V is an analysis of current relations between Japan and Russia. Although Russo-Japanese relations have come a long way since the end of the Cold War, they are far from normal. There is promise of increased cooperation, especially if the two-track process now in place continues, but there will always be a limit to the amount of cooperation possible. Neither state sees relations with the other as a main priority, which reduces the need for final resolution of the territorial dispute. Cooperation on many issues has been possible, however, and the nature and amount of contact between the two is increasing, but they remain at loggerheads over the Kurils.

The concluding chapter will look to the future of relations between the two countries and the prospects for settlement of the Kuril issue. It will examine what conditions might shift the priority ordering of Japanese and Russian policy makers that they might seek finally to resolve the territorial dispute? The conclusions will therefore look at what conditions must change in Russia, Japan or the world so that the leaders of both seek to fully or partially resolve the emotional issues that drive the dispute. Finally, the consequences of the dispute for the future of regional security will be examined.

#### **D. METHODOLOGY**

Research for this thesis has been conducted using a variety of primary and secondary sources. It has been limited, however, by the requirement to use English language sources. These include press reports, official government sources, treaties, and official releases from the Japanese and Russian Ministries for Foreign Affairs, many of which are available on the World Wide Web. Personal interviews have been conducted with officials and scholars at the American Embassy, Tokyo, the National Institute for Defense Studies in Nagatcho, Tokyo and the Japan Institute of International Affairs in Ebisu, Tokyo. The National Institute for Defense studies is similar in nature to the United States National War College, and functions as Japan's premier institute for the education

of senior officers in the Self-Defense Forces while filling a secondary role as a policy research institution. The Japan Institute of International Affairs is a policy think tank funded primarily through the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some information regarding Japanese and Russian public opinion is based on the author's personal experience in both countries and on conversations with citizens of Russia and Japan. Although the experience of living in Russia and Japan neither constitutes nor takes the place of scientific research, it has been helpful to gain a general sense of the mood within those countries. An effort has been made to remain impartial throughout, though it must be acknowledged that much of the source material has come from Japanese authors. The author has made an effort to remain objective when reading these works in an attempt to try to recognize bias where it exists. Unfortunately, no large works by contemporary Russian authors that covers the subject of the territorial dispute exist in translation.

#### **E. A NOTE ON NAMES, SPELLINGS AND TERMS**

When writing Japanese names, I have chosen to use the format most familiar to Americans, with the given name first and surname last. The current Prime Minister of Japan is therefore Junichiro Koizumi rather than the traditional Japanese method which would be Koizumi Junichiro. Additionally, I have tried to be consistent in my use of the Wade-Giles Romanization system for Chinese, except where a different form is more widely recognized. The large port city north of Shanghai is therefore spelled Qingdao, as that is the form that will be found in most atlases, and not Ch'ing-tao as it would be according to Wade-Giles Romanization.

Additionally, I have maintained transliterations of Russian place names rather than translating them. For example, I use "Primorskii Krai," and not "Maritime Territory." The Russian Federation is subdivided into several different types of administrative divisions that have varying degrees of autonomy from the Kremlin. These are in roughly descending order, "respublika," "krai," "oblast," and "okrug." Translated, these are "republic," "land" or "territory," "area," and "district." A republika and krai are generally the most autonomous, and usually form the largest territorial divisions, though there are several large okrugs. I have tried to be consistent with spellings, however, any errors remain my own. Additionally, I have decided to use "Kuril" rather



than “Kurile” when referring to the Kuril Islands, because that appears to currently be the more accepted form.

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## II. ORIGINS OF THE TERRITORIAL DISPUTE

### A. A BRIEF HISTORY

Searching for the “truth” among competing claims to the “Northern Territories” between Japan and Russia is almost by definition a subjective exercise. This is because every event in the history of relations between the two countries over the Kuril issue can be interpreted in more than one way. To understand the basis for the present claims on both sides, one must examine the issue in the context of the past 364 years.

#### 1. The ‘Opening’ of Japan

In 1638, Shogun Iemitsu Tokugawa<sup>6</sup> issued a proclamation banning all foreigners from the shores of Japan, excepting only a small Dutch mission on an isolated man-made island in Nagasaki harbor. For the next 150 years, the only foreign contact the Japanese had was with Chinese merchants and a few Dutch traders who were kept as virtual prisoners in their compound in Nagasaki.<sup>7</sup> While the “opening” of Japan is generally considered to have been accomplished by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854, the Japanese had been in contact with Russian explorers and envoys for more than 100 years before Perry arrived in Edo Bay.<sup>8</sup>

The first of these explorers was Martin Spanberg, a Dane in the employ of the Russians. Spanberg probed the shores of Honshu and Hokkaido in 1739 as part of the greater exploratory voyages of Captain Vitus Bering to the Aleutians and Alaska. Two more expeditions were sent to Japan in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the second of which nearly “opened” Japan to Russian trade, in the sense that the Russians almost gained similar trading rights as the Dutch in Nagasaki. Adam Laxman, the son of a St. Petersburg academic, led a 1792-93 expedition and received a letter from Japanese officials on

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<sup>6</sup> The “shogun” was a military dictator who ruled Japan in the name of the Emperor, who held no real authority. While the official capital of Japan was in Kyoto, where the emperor resided, the real capital was in Edo (present-day Tokyo), where the Tokugawa-dynasty shoguns made their residence. The Tokugawa dynasty, alternately called the Edo period or the Tokugawa Era, lasted from 1603 until the “Meiji Restoration” in 1868. Tokugawa rule is associated with the “closing” of Japan, and collapsed when the shogun officials were forced to “open” the country to the Americans, British and Russians in 1854-1855.

<sup>7</sup> John Fairbank, Edwin Reischauer, and Albert Craig. *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989), 409.

<sup>8</sup> Now Tokyo Bay. Edo was renamed Tokyo after the “Meiji Restoration” in 1868.

Hokkaido that would permit him to return to Nagasaki to negotiate trade relations.<sup>9</sup> These first official Russian envoys conducted themselves in an exemplary manner, gave a favorable impression to the Japanese and were in turn treated well by them.<sup>10</sup>

The wars of the French Revolution consumed the attention of the Russian Court, however, and Laxman's letter was not followed up with another expedition until 1804. That expedition, led by Nikolai Rezanov as director of the Russian-American Company, was rebuffed by the Japanese at Nagasaki. Rezanov arrived in Nagasaki in October 1804 intending to commence trade relations with the Japanese. Nearly six months were spent in Nagasaki waiting for the Edo government to decide whether to open trade, during which time Rezanov was led to believe the Japanese were interested in opening trade. After an initially cordial reception, less and less contact was permitted between the Russians and Japanese, Rezanov was suddenly sent away and told never to return to Japan.<sup>11</sup> Taking the rebuff as a personal insult, Rezanov dispatched two lieutenants on punitive raids to northern Japan.<sup>12</sup>

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to the Russians, the Americans and British had become actively interested in opening the Japanese to trade as they had the Chinese. Each year increasing numbers of both American and British ships began to appear regularly in Japanese waters. As the Japanese learned of British actions in the Opium War 1839-42 and the transformation of imperial China into a semi-colonial state at the hands of the Western powers, Shogun's officials were divided over how to deal with the Russians, Americans and British who were intruding in Japanese waters in increasingly large numbers.<sup>13</sup> The Japanese were determined that what happened to the Chinese should not happen to them as well.

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<sup>9</sup> George Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697-1875* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 97-116.

<sup>10</sup> George Lensen. *The Russian Push Toward Japan*, 50-54, 118-120.

<sup>11</sup> Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan*, 150-157.

<sup>12</sup> The raids were conducted by Nikolai Khvostov and Gavril Davidov in 1806-07 in Sakhalin and Etorofu, devastating several Japanese settlements. Although conducted in a private capacity, they were taken by the Japanese to have been official policy. Following the raids, the Japanese began calling the Russians "aki-oni," or "red devils" instead of the former, innocuous name of "aki-hito," or "red men." The Russians repaired some of the damage with an official apology given seven years later. The story is related in both Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan*, 167-180 and John Stephen, *The Kuril Islands: Russo-Japanese Frontier in the Pacific*, (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1974), 73-77.

<sup>13</sup> Fairbank et al., *East Asia*, 486-87; Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 86-87.

1854-1855 was a pivotal time for the ruling Shogunate, divided almost evenly between those eager to exclude foreigners and others who argued that Japan had many useful lessons to learn from them, lessons that, properly applied, would preserve Japan's independence. Eventually American Commodore Matthew C. Perry broke the deadlock by leaving a not so subtle threat in 1852 that when he returned, he would bring with him a large fleet. In fact, he returned in 1854 with one quarter of the U.S. Navy.<sup>14</sup> The leadership understood it would take little effort for him to halt the seaborne rice trade upon which the population of Edo was dependent and so elected to negotiate.

Unlike the Americans and British who were only trying to force Japan to end its exclusionary trade policies, the Russians sought to define their border and counter the growing influence of the British and Americans in North East Asia. Russian Admiral Evfimii Putiatin went to Japan in 1853 on the heels of the Perry expedition to attempt to open diplomatic and commercial relations and settle the boundary issue between Russia and Japan. Between Putiatin's first expedition and his second in 1855, the international environment changed substantially for Russia. With the onset of the Crimean War, Russia desperately needed to settle the frontier issue on the Kurils and Sakhalin.<sup>15</sup> When Putiatin returned to Japan, he did so in a single frigate that did not appear to pose much of a threat to Edo. Britain and Russia were at war, and St. Petersburg could spare no more than one ship. Consequently, the negotiations between Russia and Japan assumed more of a feeling of normal diplomatic relations between two basically equal entities, unlike the concurrent British and American negotiations with their implied threat of force.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the Russo-Japanese negotiations, territorial issues were the main points of contention, with both sides finally agreeing on the de facto boundary that had existed since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century between the islands of Etorofu and Uruppu (Urup in Russian). No decision was taken on Sakhalin. This boundary definition was consistent with a unilateral decree issued by Alexander I in September 1821 that defined Russian territorial waters as north of the southernmost tip of Urup. Supplemental instructions further defining Russian boundaries were subsequently issued to Putiatin by Nicholas I.

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<sup>14</sup> Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan*, 315-318.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 86; Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan*,

<sup>16</sup> For a full description of the negotiations, please see Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan*, 330-337.

These indicated that the southern Russian boundary should be Urup.<sup>17</sup> The negotiations were long and difficult, with both Japan and Russia claiming the entire chain. In the end, however, a “compromise” was reached that recognized that, since the Japanese occupied Etorofu and the Russians occupied Uruppu, the official boundary should lie between those two islands. Sakhalin remained a point of contention, and it was decided to leave the island jointly settled with no clear line of demarcation between Japanese and Russian communities. This treaty was negotiated entirely during a time of peace between Russia and Japan. Therefore, it came to be regarded as the single territorial arrangement struck between equal powers without a threat of coercion by either side. Unfortunately, this atmosphere of cooperation between the two countries over the Northern Territories was not destined to endure. Incidentally, the border demarcation between Russia and Japan marked Japan’s formal acceptance of the Western system of nation-states with political boundaries. Being an island people, the Japanese hitherto had seen no need to define their borders until the Russians forced them to.

## **2. Modernization and Equality**

After the “Meiji Restoration” of 1868, the most pressing problem faced by the new government in its relations with Russia was the lack of a defined border on Sakhalin, a legacy of the Shimoda Treaty. Both Russia and Japan tried for several years to establish greater claims to the island, leading to several conflicts and making the need for a settlement more pressing. International pressure and domestic unrest combined to push the Meiji leadership towards concessions on the Sakhalin question. On May 7, 1875, the two empires signed the “Treaty of St. Petersburg,” according to which Japan ceded to Russia all rights to Sakhalin. In return, the Tsar surrendered “the group of the islands called the Kurils, which he possesses, with all the sovereign rights belonging to this possession, so that henceforth the said islands of the Kurils shall belong to the Empire of Japan.”<sup>18</sup> This statement is occasionally used by Japanese scholars seeking to support the Japanese claims as evidence that neither the Russians nor Japanese leaders at the time

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<sup>17</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace, 1985-1998*, vol. 2 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 515.

<sup>18</sup> *Treaty of Exchange of Sakhalin With the Kuril Islands [Treaty of St. Petersburg] (7 May 1875)*, appendix two, John A. Harrison, *Japan’s Northern Frontier* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1953), 171-172.

considered the four islands that are now called the “Northern Territories” as being a part of the Kuril Islands. Rather, the Kuril Islands as defined by the 1875 treaty must begin north of Etorofu. The argument follows that since the Russians gave the “Kuril Islands” to Japan, and since they could not have given over something they did not own, the four disputed territories must not have been part of the “Kuril Islands.”<sup>19</sup> At the time of the treaty, however, the four islands now disputed did not have a separate name of their own.

All evidence points to the Japanese as being the side at a disadvantage during the 1875 negotiations as Japan was still in the early stages of modernization. By the 1870’s, the sea otter and fur seal populations on the Kuril Islands had been decimated, so that the islands held relatively little commercial or economic value for the Russians, especially compared to the possibilities that existed on Sakhalin.<sup>20</sup> Regardless, the negotiations were concluded peacefully, and with the border disputes with Russia apparently solved, the Japanese turned inward to focus on modernization. Unfortunately, the Treaty of St. Petersburg would be the last time the two states would settle territorial differences peacefully.

As Japan modernized, the main priority of the Meiji government became equality with the West and revision of the “unequal treaties,” by which the Japanese meant all the original treaties signed with the various Western powers in the 1850’s at the end of the Tokugawa era (1603-1867). Equality required that Tokyo create powerful military forces, a strong economy and acquire colonies in Asia. Following in the footsteps of its Western mentors, the Japanese turned their attention to the Asian mainland, and their first efforts at expansion were directed toward Korea. Japanese aims in Korea brought them into increasing conflict with both China and Russia. Using Chinese intervention in Korea as a pretext, Japan went to war with the Ch’ing dynasty in 1894. By 1895, the Chinese were thoroughly defeated by Japan’s modernized forces, a Japanese victory that surprised many in the West.<sup>21</sup> But it would be the clash of political and economic interests with

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<sup>19</sup> Researchers from the Russian Studies department at the National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS), interview by author, Ebisu, Tokyo, Japan, 2 July 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Fairbank et al., *East Asia*, 553. The Chinese intervention was actually at the request of the Korean king to quell a rebellion by an anti-foreign religious group. However, Japan sent a larger force than the initial force sent by the Chinese and seized control of the Korean government. The Japanese then forced the Koreans to declare war on China, following shortly with a declaration of war by Japan.

Russia, and not the war with China, that foreshadowed greater conflicts to come.<sup>22</sup> The Japanese would not forgive the “triple intervention” of Russia, Germany and France that forced the Japanese to abandon the Liaodong Peninsula, which it had acquired from China in the Treaty of Shimoniseki. When Russia then “leased” the peninsula from China in 1897, gaining the ports of Lushun (Port Arthur) and Dalian that Japan had captured in the Sino-Japanese War and then been forced by the “triple intervention” to abandon, anti-Russian sentiment “reached and unprecedented height in Japan. Russia had become an obvious enemy.”<sup>23</sup>

The Sino-Japanese War came as something of a surprise to the Western powers, who expected the Chinese to win because of their sheer size. While many in the West understood that the Japanese victory heralded the rise of a new power in Asia, they understood neither the intentions nor the capabilities of the Japanese. Between 1895 and 1897, Japanese military expenditures rose exponentially from 20 million to 100 million yen as Japan rapidly increased its military might. At the same time, Japanese diplomats attempted to reach an agreement with Russia over spheres of influence and “exchange Korea for Manchuria.”<sup>24</sup> Russian Minister of Finance Sergei Witte encouraged the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railroad in an attempt to stimulate development of the Russian Far East. Witte favored reaching accommodation with the Japanese regarding Korea and focus efforts in the areas of “trade and investment to project Russian influence” rather than military adventures to keep from provoking Chinese or Japanese resistance.<sup>25</sup> However, rivals among the Tsar’s close advisors advocated “rapid and immediate expansion of Russian investment and control in both Manchuria and Korea, [because they] were confident of Russian victory in any consequent war.”<sup>26</sup> A combination of the tsar’s personal weakness with opposing policies from the Ministries

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<sup>22</sup> Sandra Wilson and David Wells. “Introduction,” in David Wells and Sandra Wilson, Eds. *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective: 1904-05* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999) p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Wada Haruki, “Japanese-Russian Relations and the United States, 1855-1930,” in *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters 1868-1926*, ed. J. Thomas Rimer (Stanford: Stanford University Press; Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press Center, 1995), 207.

<sup>24</sup> Wilson and Wells, “Introduction,” 7.

<sup>25</sup> John J. Stephen, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 60.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson and Wells, “Introduction,” 8-9.



of Finance, War and Foreign Affairs had resulted in significant over commitments, such that, “in 1904 Russia was ready for war neither in Asia nor in Europe.”<sup>27</sup>

At the time, the dominant image of the Japanese in Russia was of a “country inhabited by polite, doll-like people” who were less than human and less than equal to the superior Russians.<sup>28</sup> Although the Japanese had already defeated the Chinese, and had been steadily building up their military with the help of British and German advisors, the Japanese were not seen as a credible threat. The Chinese were not considered great adversaries, however, as various European powers had exacted concessions at gunpoint in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Russians had successfully forced the Japanese to give up some of their rights to China following the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War. Little notice was given as well to the alliance signed between the English and Japanese in 1902. It was the “first military pact on equal terms between a Western and a non-Western nation” and was heavily promoted by officials in the Japanese government who were “convinced that war with Russia was inevitable.”<sup>29</sup> Among Tsar Nicolas II’s advisors, Minister of Interior Affairs V. Plehve was of the opinion that, “to hold back revolution we need a little, victorious war.”<sup>30</sup> In December 1903, after two years of inconclusive negotiations over respective interests in Manchuria and Korea, both Tsar Nicholas II and the Japanese Cabinet believed war was inevitable, if not necessary.<sup>31</sup> Nicolas himself was dismissive of the Japanese, whom he held in contempt and believed to be racially inferior, and did not listen to either his Minister of War Kuropatkin or Minister of Finance Witte, who was dismissed in August 1903. Both favored a conciliatory line towards Japan and reestablishment of friendly relations.<sup>32</sup> The Tsar and his officials in St. Petersburg had drastically underestimated the strength of the Japanese,

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<sup>27</sup> William C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia: 1600-1914* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 328-329.

<sup>28</sup> Yulia Mikhailova, “Japan and Russia: Mutual Images, 1904-05,” in *The Japanese and Europe: Images and Perceptions*, ed. Bert Edstrom (Richmond Surrey, UK: Japan Library [Curzon Press], 1989), 153.

<sup>29</sup> Fairbank et al., *East Asia*, 555.

<sup>30</sup> P. Cherkasov and D. Chernishevskii, *Istoriia Imperatorskoi Rossii* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniie Otnosheniia, 1994), 367. Trans. by author. Original quote is “Чтобы удержать революцию, нам нужна маленькая победоносная война.”

<sup>31</sup> Wilson and Wells, “Introduction,” 8-9.

<sup>32</sup> Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 377.

however, and believed that if war occurred, the Russians would easily defeat Japanese forces.<sup>33</sup>

The results of the war are well known and do not need repeating here. More important, however, the war impacted the perceptions that the Russian and Japanese people hold of each other, perceptions that have shaped and constrained subsequent diplomatic interaction. Until 1904 the average Japanese had no contact with Russia, and therefore probably had no opinion beyond simple curiosity regarding the Russians. However, after 1904-05, the dominant image of Russians and Japanese in each country was defined by the conflict and wartime propaganda. It should come as no surprise that the mutual perceptions developed during wartime were not flattering. Yet it would be those images set in the minds of ordinary Japanese and Russians that would continue to have a significant effect through the end of World War II, and arguably even today.<sup>34</sup> The naval battle at the Straits of Tsushima and the “Treaty of Portsmouth” became enduring symbols of Russian national humiliation. Although the attack at Port Arthur was probably not the complete surprise it was made out to be, the war generated a strong desire for revenge among many Russians.<sup>35</sup> For the Japanese, the war was immensely popular and established a symbol of national glory while simultaneously serving as a unifying factor linking the common citizen to the state.<sup>36</sup> However, despite the popularity, the war would also prove immensely destructive to Japan. Not only had the Japanese strained their economy, but also they took away a mistaken belief that “‘spirit’ had been and always would be the key to success.” This belief would prove costly when the Imperial forces engaged in warfare with the United States in 1941 – a much more powerful enemy than the weakened Russian state of 1904.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Cherkasov and Chernishevskii, *Istoriia Imperatorskoi Rossii*, 367

<sup>34</sup> Mikhailova, “Japan and Russia: Mutual Images, 1904-05,” 152-154, 160-161.

<sup>35</sup> ADM Sergei G. Gorshkov, *Sea Power of the State*, trans. ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979) 87-89. Gorshkov claims there were enough signs leading up to the attack on Port Arthur including reports from a Russian agent in Japan that it was not really a surprise, or at least should not have been. This is consistent with the attitude of both sides toward the inevitability of war. However, the propaganda value within Russia was and still is significant. Current articles in the Russian press will occasionally reference the Russo-Japanese War, especially in connection with the territorial dispute.

<sup>36</sup> Wilson and Wells, “Introduction,” 19.

<sup>37</sup> S.P. MacKenzie, “Willpower or Firepower? The Unlearned Military Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904-05*, ed. David Wells and Sandra Wilson (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 37.

### 3. Hostile Friends and Fearsome Enemies

Following the war, Japan and Russia entered into a rapprochement. In the Treaty of Portsmouth, Japan had secured its interests in Korea, which it annexed in 1910, and Japan and Russia gradually came to an agreement on the division of Manchuria between themselves.<sup>38</sup> This brief period of cooperation ended with the rise of the Bolsheviks to power in the Russian Civil War. The Japanese invaded Siberia in 1918 along with the British, French, and Americans, to “protect Czech soldiers.” For Tokyo, however, intervention was a barely disguised attempt to broaden their sphere of influence in North East Asia.<sup>39</sup> The Japanese eventually met fierce resistance from Soviet partisans as the “intervention” dragged on long after the other allies had all withdrawn their forces from Soviet territory and the “Reds” consolidated their hold on the country. The goal of Japanese policy during the intervention was to prevent any one White Russian leader from consolidating his hold in Siberia rather than to defeat the Bolshevik revolution. Therefore, they supported many “leaders” whose “opposition” to the Bolsheviks involved pillaging and murdering civilian populations.<sup>40</sup> Diplomatically isolated in an action that also found no support at home, the Japanese finally pulled out their last troops in October 1922.

The Soviets never forgot Japan’s anti-Bolshevik actions in Siberia and Sakhalin not to mention the Russo-Japanese War. Several scholars have argued that memories of Japanese intervention were a driving factor in Soviet policy toward Japan as late as the post-World War II period.<sup>41</sup> There was a good reason for mutual mistrust, however. Japanese behavior in the interwar period was marked by harassment of Soviet fishing and merchant vessels, violations of Soviet territorial sovereignty in the Kamchatka peninsula, and flagrant violation of Soviet territorial seas by Japanese fishing vessels with assistance from the Imperial Fleet.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, the Japanese were active on or near the Soviet

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<sup>38</sup> Wilson and Wells, “Introduction,” 21-22.

<sup>39</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace, 1697-1985*, vol. 1 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 33.

<sup>40</sup> William F. Nimmo, *Japan and Russia: A Reevaluation in the Post-Soviet Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>41</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 33; Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 10; Wilson and Wells, “Introduction,” 22.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 129-130.

border in China, Manchuria and Outer Mongolia. The Soviets reciprocated by directing revolutionary and subversive activities against the Japanese government through the activities of the Comintern and a spy ring run by the famously well-placed agent, Richard Sorge.<sup>43</sup>

The simmering hostility between the two states could not long remain dormant. In 1939, Japanese and Soviet forces engaged in full-scale warfare along the Manchurian border with the Soviet client-state of Mongolia. In heavy fighting that lasted most of the summer of 1939, the Soviets displayed a “military superiority heretofore unseen by the Japanese.”<sup>44</sup> Unable to defeat the Soviets on land, the Japanese sought accommodation. Although Stalin initially demanded Sakhalin and *all* of the Kuril Islands, in April 1941 as the European situation worsened, the Soviet Dictator agreed to a Neutrality Pact with Japan without major concessions.<sup>45</sup> The main article of the pact stipulated that if “either side was involved in war with another power, the other would observe neutrality ‘throughout the duration of the conflict.’”<sup>46</sup> The pact was meant to last for five years, until April 1946.

The role of the Neutrality Pact and its abrogation by the Soviets in 1945 has played a major role in Japanese claims regarding the disputed islands.<sup>47</sup> It is important to note, however, that by 1941 neither the Soviets nor the Japanese trusted one another, and either would have broken the pact at any time if it suited their purposes.<sup>48</sup> The Yalta Conference was the defining moment for U.S. involvement in the dispute. Many of the agreements reached between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin concerning the post-war world were secret, unknown even to many planners in the United States government and military.<sup>49</sup> Roosevelt believed the islands had been taken from Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, an impression that Stalin was in no rush to correct, although it is doubtful

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<sup>43</sup> David Rees, *The Soviet Seizure of the Kurils* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 24-25.

<sup>44</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 38, Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Rees, *The Soviet Seizure of the Kurils*, 36.

<sup>47</sup> NIDS, Interview.

<sup>48</sup> Foreign Minister Matsuoka, who negotiated and signed the pact for Japan, was urging war against the Soviets immediately after the German invasion, saying, “Japan should wait for the precise moment for the ripe persimmon to fall to the ground.” Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 41.

that even had Roosevelt known the truth he would have acted differently.<sup>50</sup> In just 15 minutes, FDR agreed to Stalin's suggestion the Kuril Islands be "handed over" to the Soviet Union, the justification Stalin would use to seize the islands in the days following the Japanese surrender in 1945. In April 1945, before the fall of Germany, Molotov announced to Ambassador Satō that the Neutrality Pact would not be renewed and that as of August 9<sup>th</sup>, the Soviet Union would be at war with Japan.<sup>51</sup>

The atomic bomb did not come as a surprise to Stalin, as he had been informed of its preparation by a spy within the Manhattan Project. However, he did not expect the bomb would be dropped so quickly. Although Soviet forces were not yet fully prepared, he ordered an assault on Manchuria to begin August 9<sup>th</sup>.<sup>52</sup> Soviet forces began their attack approximately 30 minutes after the declaration of war had been read to Ambassador Satō. The following day, Soviet forces in northern Sakhalin attacked the Japanese forces in the southern part of the island. Fierce fighting continued until August 19<sup>th</sup> when most Japanese forces finally surrendered, although sporadic resistance continued for a few more days among small pockets of Japanese soldiers.<sup>53</sup>

On August 18<sup>th</sup>, the Soviets commenced their attack on the Kuril Islands – nine days after the Soviets declared war, eight days after the Japanese signaled acceptance of the terms of Potsdam, four days after the Allies responded, and three days after the Japanese Emperor announced to his subjects that the war was over. The operations concluded on September 5<sup>th</sup>, when the Soviets consolidated their hold on the Habomai islets. The same day, Stalin made a speech to the Soviet populace, declaring that, "for forty years, we the men of the older generation, have waited for this day. And now this day has come. From now on, Southern Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands will serve as a

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 150.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 152-155. Stalin had first mentioned his "price" for entering war against Japan at the Teheran Conference in 1943. Roosevelt went to Teheran believing the Kurils had been taken from Russia during the Russo-Japanese War, and did not know they had been exchanged through a peaceful treaty nearly 30 years before that war. A memorandum was provided by the State Department for Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, but neither man read the document. Roosevelt was more concerned with Soviet intentions in China, and would have likely considered the Kurils and Sakhalin a minor price to pay for Soviet assistance.

<sup>51</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 23; Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 58-59.

<sup>52</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 61.

means of direct communications with the ocean and as a base for the defense of our country against Japanese aggression. We have won.”<sup>54</sup> The Kuril Islands were annexed into the Soviet Union on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **B. WHENCE THE “NORTHERN TERRITORIES?”**

Why do the Japanese only claim the four islands that are commonly known as the “Northern Territories,” or “Hoppo Ryōdo” in Japan? The answer lies in the period surrounding the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, from 1947 to 1951. In 1951, the Korean War was at its hottest period, China had been “lost” to “world Communism,” the Soviets demonstrated the Americans no longer had a nuclear monopoly, and the 1948 Berlin crisis had occurred. Although the goal of occupying Japan had initially been to “demilitarize and democratize,”<sup>55</sup> by 1951 the United States was looking for an Asian ally to replace China. Like Germany in Europe, Japan offered several advantages: an industrialized economy, a diligent workforce, and proximity to the Soviet Union.

The role of the United States in the dispute begins with Roosevelt’s dismissal of the Kuril chain as former Russian territory that had been seized through Japanese “violence and greed.”<sup>56</sup> John Foster Dulles, the special advisor to the State Department for the peace settlement with Japan, was primarily responsible for writing the draft that would eventually be accepted as the San Francisco Peace Treaty. A Republican, Dulles was appointed by Truman in 1950 to ensure bipartisan support for the treaty negotiations. In his role as chief negotiator for the United States, he had to also conduct negotiations with all the nations of the Far Eastern Commission (FEC), which comprised 11 nations with which the Japanese had been at war, as well as seek the approval of the 40 or so other nations which had declared war on Japan to insure the final peace treaty would be acceptable to all parties.<sup>57</sup> Treaty negotiations among all the countries of the FEC –

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<sup>54</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 28.

<sup>55</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 78.

<sup>56</sup> Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943* (Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1961), 48-49. Also qtd. in Rees, *The Soviet Seizure of the Kurils*, 152. The Cairo Declaration stated that Japan would be “stripped of all islands in the Pacific which she had occupied since the beginning of the First World War in 1914 ... [and] expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed.” At Yalta, Roosevelt believed the Kurils had been taken from Russia through war in 1904-1905 when the central and northern islands had been peacefully exchanged in 1875. The four islands in dispute closest to Japan were never occupied by Russia.

<sup>57</sup> Rees, *The Soviet Seizure of the Kurils*, 90; Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 29-38.

which included the Soviet Union – were difficult, especially concerning territorial issues. Dulles consistently maintained that the Potsdam Declaration was the primary legal document upon which the treaty should be based, and that all other agreements were subject to confirmation through treaty.<sup>58</sup> His draft marked the first clear rejection of the Yalta accords with the Soviet Union, which had still been the guiding principle in post-war settlements, as the treaty did not “hand over” the Kurils to the Soviets, as specified in the Yalta accord. Officially, the “United States adopted the position that title could be transferred only to those nations willing to be a party to the peace treaty,” otherwise, Japan would renounce claim to the various territories without naming a recipient.<sup>59</sup> This position marked a break with the Yalta accords, because the Kuril Islands were not automatically “handed over” to the Soviets with full international recognition. To gain undisputed title to the territory seized at the end of the war, the Soviets had to participate in and sign the peace treaty at the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951. Dulles accurately predicted the Soviets would refuse to sign his treaty.<sup>60</sup> A consequence of the San Francisco Peace Treaty was that by refusing to sign, the Soviets drove a wedge between the Japanese and themselves. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa’s interpretation is that Dulles did this by design to encourage irredentism towards the Soviet Union and to divert animosity for their defeat in the war away from the United States.<sup>61</sup> Whether that was or was not his implicit intention, the “Northern Territories” dispute was a direct result.

### **1. Respective Claims**

Despite the role of the United States was in fomenting the territorial dispute, and despite the fact that the concept of the “Northern Territories” is a designation created in the 1950’s at the height of the Cold War, it is possible that the issue would have arisen regardless of U.S. action or possibly even with Soviet signature of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The primary Japanese claim to the “Northern Territories” is that they are the “inherent territory” of Japan. Hiroshi Kimura, formerly of the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University, defines the concept of “inherent territory” as territory “that is

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<sup>58</sup> Rees, *The Soviet Seizure of the Kurils*, 91.

<sup>59</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 85-88.

<sup>61</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 89.

regarded as historically and legally as part of [a] particular country alone, due to the fact that it has belonged to that nation from ancient times without becoming the possession of any other nation.”<sup>62</sup> Although this concept will be dealt with in greater detail later in chapter IV, it is important to understand that the four islands Japan now claims were the only four that were never under prior Russian control until their seizure by the Soviet Union in 1945. The demand for four islands is only the stated policy of the Japanese government because it was adopted as a goal of the Liberal Democratic Party on its creation in 1956.<sup>63</sup> All other major parties have consistently demanded the return of the entire Kuril chain. The Japanese Communist Party demands the entire island of Sakhalin as well – the most extensive territorial demand of any Japanese political party.<sup>64</sup>

Although the Japanese use legal arguments and officially refer to the Soviet abrogation of the Neutrality Pact in 1945 (which they never intended to honor themselves longer than it suited their purposes), or the invalidity of the Yalta Agreement because it was a secret accord, the main argument remains that the Japanese do not consider what they now call the “Northern Territories” to have ever been anything but Japanese. The historical record does in fact bear this out, as all four islands had always administered as part of Hokkaido since their colonization in 1799, unlike Sakhalin or the Kuril Islands north of Etorofu.<sup>65</sup> The legal problems with the Japanese argument arise with Article 2(c) of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, when the Japanese renounced “all right, title and

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<sup>62</sup> Hiroshi Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Brezhnev and Andropov*, vol. 1 of *Distant Neighbors* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 58. Hiroshi Kimura is one of the best known Japanese researchers of the “Northern Territories,” and has been nicknamed by colleagues, “Mr. Northern Territories.” He has recently reached retirement age (as of 2002) and has left the public university system for a private teaching post in Tokyo. He is best known for his work while attached to the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University.

<sup>63</sup> The Liberal Democratic Party merges the interests of party and state in a way not wholly dissimilar from the Communist Party in China or the former Soviet Union. Since its creation in 1956, the LDP has been in control of the Prime Ministerial position for all but two brief periods in the 1990’s when it briefly lost power and a second time when allowed a coalition partner to have the post. The first period was from July 1993 to April 1994 when an opposition party coalition briefly held power under the Social Democratic Party and the second from June 1994 to January 1996 when the New Komeito party was given the post.

<sup>64</sup> Mid-level officials in the Political Section and Defense Attaché Office at the American Embassy, interview by author, Nagatcho, Tokyo, Japan, 25 June 2002.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 69-70, 96. After colonization in 1799, the central shogunate government took direct control of the northern half of Ezo (as Hokkaido was called), Kunashiri and Etorofu. Direct control was expanded to all of Ezo and Sakhalin in 1807. The entire region was returned in 1821 to the Matsumae clan, the traditional rulers of Ezo.



claim to the Kuril Islands.”<sup>66</sup> In the Japanese text, the Kuril Islands are referred to as “Chīshima Rettō,” which regardless of who controlled what islands, always conceptually included Kunashiri and Etorofu. Therefore, it could be argued that if Japan unilaterally accepts the terms of the San Francisco treaty, it cannot maintain its claim to these islands, although this does not mean Russia has a valid claim to legally retain the islands.<sup>67</sup> In response to this, however, there is the previously mentioned argument that holds that the four islands were not part of the larger Kuril Island chain because the “Kuril Islands” had been given to Japan by Russia in 1875, and Japan had already been in possession of the four currently disputed islands at that time.<sup>68</sup> Obviously, say the Japanese, Russia could not give to Japan that which it did not own, therefore the “Northern Territories” are not part of the “Kuril Islands” according to the Treaty of St. Petersburg.

The Russians also claim rights to the four disputed islands based upon legal and historical claims, although the basis of the Russian claims is, like the Japanese, more emotional than substantial. Russian scholars and nationalists have advanced several justifications for their claims: prior discovery and exploration; the 1904 attack on Port Arthur and the 1918-22 Japanese intervention were illegal acts that annulled all previous treaties between the two empires freeing the Soviets of any obligations. All these are questionable, especially the last claim, since neither war between states (Russo-Japanese War) nor state succession (the Soviet Union as successor state to Russia) automatically annuls all previous treaties as the Soviets and now Russians apparently claim.<sup>69</sup> The 1855 Shimoda Treaty and 1875 St. Petersburg treaties both were negotiated under peaceful conditions, during which Japan was arguably the weaker partner.

The main Russian legal claims, then, come from World War II, in the form of the Yalta agreement and the Potsdam Declaration. At Yalta, Roosevelt granted Stalin the Kurils as part of the price for Soviet entry into the war against Japan. The Potsdam Declaration reinforced this claim by officially limiting Japanese sovereignty to the four

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<sup>66</sup> “Treaty of Peace With Japan, 8 September 1951,” *Taiwan Document Project* [cited 25 February 2002], available at [www.taiwandocuments.org/sanfrancisco01.htm](http://www.taiwandocuments.org/sanfrancisco01.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>67</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 525-526.

<sup>68</sup> NIDS, Interview.

<sup>69</sup> Louis Henkin, Richard Crawford Pugh, Oscar Schachter and Hans Smit, *International Law: Cases and Materials*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1993), 503-535.

main islands and “such minor islands as [the Allies] determine.”<sup>70</sup> However, while the Russians are quick to point to these documents as laying a sound legal basis for their claims, they are less apt to point out Stalin himself essentially abrogated both documents in his post-war policies, treating both as mere formalities more for the benefit of his Allies than as constraints on his actions. There are two problems with Yalta as a legal basis for a claim, in the view of one Japanese scholar. First, the relevant protocol was a secret accord, and as Hasegawa notes, “it is difficult to refute Japan’s argument that no state should be bound by a secret agreement whose existence was not known to it.”<sup>71</sup> Second, Stalin never kept his end of the agreement, especially with regard to post-war Poland and in general allowing free elections in Eastern Europe. Additionally, the Potsdam Declaration called for the immediate repatriation of POW’s. But Stalin abrogated this agreement through the seizure of Japanese 640,000 POW’s for use as slave labor in gulags throughout the Soviet Union, an issue that still arouses anger among many Japanese. Although the Japanese generally did the same in the territories they conquered, the Soviet actions have created a sense of victimization among the Japanese that has enabled many of them to avoid a close scrutiny of Kwangtung Army actions in China and Manchuria. Regardless, over 60,000 Japanese had died or simply disappeared by 1957 when the last POW’s were returned.<sup>72</sup> The question thus remains, to what extent may a state benefit from agreements by which it does not itself abide?

Whatever the legal arguments, the real Russian claim to the islands is more concerned with the idea that Russia was the victor of World War II, and Japan the vanquished, a point made very clear by Khrushchev during the 1956 negotiations.<sup>73</sup> To paraphrase a former Soviet (now Ukrainian) officer, great powers do not give up territory, especially to a country that power has defeated.<sup>74</sup> Kimura notes that despite the

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<sup>70</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 32; “Potsdam Proclamation, 26 July 1945,” in Department of State, *The Conference of Berlin (Potsdam)*, 1945, vol. 2 (Washington D.C., 1960) 1281, quoted in Rees, *The Soviet Seizure of the Kurils*, 153.

<sup>71</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 523.

<sup>72</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 72.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Haslam, “The Pattern of Soviet-Japanese Relations Since World War II,” in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Jonathan Haslam and Andrew Kuchins, eds., *Russia and Japan: An Unresolved Dilemma Between Distant Neighbors* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 17.

<sup>74</sup> LCOL Evgenii Akhmalidinov, Ukrainian Air Forces, conversation with author, 11 June 2002.

Cairo Declaration, the Soviet Union gained 670,000 sq. km as a result of World War II, “an amount equivalent to the combined land area of Great Britain, Italy and Greece,” of which the “Northern Territories” are a small part.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Soviet actions in the Second World War continued the historical pattern of incorporation of territory gained through conquest into the concept of the Russian homeland. To the Russian people, the Kurils were a reward for their sacrifices during the war, as well as final revenge for the national humiliation from the Russo-Japanese War. The results of the war are considered inviolable, and though Soviet/Russian scholars cannot point to any one legal document that transferred the disputed territories from Japan to the Soviet Union/Russia, the argument made by former Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin in 1969 and reiterated by former Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in 1977 is that “national boundaries as they stand should not be subjected to alterations,” and that “a series of international and bilateral agreements and treaties led to the present situation.”<sup>76</sup> While the borders of Russia have changed drastically since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the mentality remains at least as far as the four disputed islands are concerned. The domestic factor behind this situation will be explored later in chapter IV.

## **2. Abnormal Normalization**

The 1955-56 negotiations that reestablished relations between the Soviets and Japanese did see a brief period when it looked as though a peace treaty might be possible, a combination of factors prevented resolution of the territorial question at that time. At the final negotiations in London, Soviet representative Jakob Malik informally offered to surrender the two smaller islands of Shikotan and the Habomais in return for a treaty. It has been suggested that American intervention prevented Japanese acceptance of the two-island solution, when John Foster Dulles threatened that if Japan gave up its claims to Kunashiri and Etorofu, the United States would consider annexing Okinawa.<sup>77</sup> While Dulles’ intervention may have had some impact, it probably did not play the central role suggested by Japanese-American scholar Tsuyoshi Hasegawa as the reason the talks eventually failed to produce a treaty. The hardening of the Japanese position may have

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<sup>75</sup> Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Brezhnev and Andropov*, 23.

<sup>76</sup> Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Brezhnev and Andropov*, 65.

<sup>77</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 124.

been the outcome of a power struggle between Foreign Minister Shigemitsu and Prime Minister Hatoyama whose Democratic Party was merging with the Liberal Party of long-time former Prime Minister Yoshida to form the present Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).<sup>78</sup> The one certainty in the matter is that, for whatever reason, the Japanese government changed its 1951 position when the Japanese Cabinet issued instructions to the Japanese negotiators that only the return of four islands was acceptable. Although settlement would have put the Americans in an uncomfortable position vis-à-vis Okinawa, the Soviets felt they should dictate the terms and anything else would be tantamount to a loss of prestige.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Berton, "The Japanese-Russian Territorial Dilemma: Historical Background, Disputes, Issues, Questions, Solution Scenarios or A thousand Scenarios for the Thousand Islands Dispute," white paper, Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1992, 55; Haslam, "The Pattern of Soviet-Japanese Relations Since World War II," 14-15.

<sup>79</sup> Haslam, "The Pattern of Soviet-Japanese Relations Since World War II," 17.

### **III. VALUE OF THE “NORTHERN TERRITORIES”**

#### **A. REAL OR IMAGINED VALUE?**

The Kuril Islands, and the four Northern Territories in particular, have been more than a footnote in history, although they are rarely recognized for their role. It was the Russian encroachment from the north along the island chain that forced Japan to become the first Asian “modern” nation in the Western mold. When U.S. intelligence lost track of the Japanese fleet in November 1941, they were sitting in strict radio silence in Hitokappu Bay in Etorofu. By launching the attack from Etorofu, the Japanese fleet avoided the regular shipping channels and was able to approach Hawaii undetected. Finally, the Pacific War ended with the Soviet seizure of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai Islets in the last combat action of the war.

These four islands have stood in the way of a peace treaty between Russia and Japan for over half a century. Emotions have been enflamed in both countries as the dispute has cost the Japanese international prestige and the Russians financial assistance and investment from Japan. Those issues will be explored in later chapters. Yet for what have these two countries sacrificed so much potential? This chapter will examine the strategic and economic value of the disputed islands, and show that the primary value of the islands for both Russia and Japan cannot be explained in material terms.

#### **B. STRATEGIC VALUE**

##### **1. Japan and the Northern Frontier**

The Kuril Islands were the first place Russians and Japanese came into contact with each other in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as Russian traders and adventurers moved south along the chain seeking riches and trade. The Japanese always looked at the northern reaches of their territory as a large frontier, something akin to the American West in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Before the Russians, there were the Ainu, who originally inhabited all of Hokkaido and the northernmost parts of Honshu. It was not until the 11<sup>th</sup> century that the Japanese fully consolidated their hold on Honshu and began to settle the southern tip of Hokkaido. For nearly all of recorded Japanese history, therefore, there has been a concept of a “northern threat” and a northern frontier that has required defense as the

modern Japanese civilization pushed northward from Kyushu and southern Honshu.<sup>80</sup> As the Ainu were increasingly subjugated and the island of Hokkaido settled with ethnic Japanese, the “northern threat” became the Russian traders. Kunashiri and Etorofu were only colonized in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in response to Russian presence on the northern islands as the Japanese felt they had to define a border with Russia. Therefore, at the beginning of Russo-Japanese relations, the islands were strategically important to the Japanese as a buffer against the Russian empire to protect Hokkaido and, more importantly, Honshu.<sup>81</sup>

After the Shimoda and St. Petersburg Treaties were signed in 1855 and 1875 respectively, the Japanese had a defined border with the Russian empire, and the sense of a northern threat should have disappeared. The Kurils proved strategically significant again for the Japanese when, in 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor was launched from Hitokappu Bay in Etorofu. After the Soviets seized the entire chain in 1945, the “northern threat” reappeared in the Japanese psychology. By taking control of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomais, the Soviets placed themselves within sight of Japan’s northern coast. The strategic value of the islands then shifted from the offensive to the defensive for the Japanese. The islands remained important for Japanese Defense Agency planning, whose annual Yama-Sakura exercise scenario was of an invasion of Hokkaido by Soviet forces staged on the islands.<sup>82</sup> How the Japanese would have utilized the islands for their own strategic interests is unclear, considering that Japanese demands for the Northern Territories had from the beginning included an implicit understanding that the islands would be demilitarized.<sup>83</sup> Addressing the JDA’s valuation of the islands, collaborating Japanese and American scholars Masato Kimura and David Welch note in a 1998 study that: “[Japanese] arguments have been entirely derivative of *Soviet*

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<sup>80</sup> John A. Harrison, *Japan’s Northern Frontier: A Preliminary Study in Colonization and Expansion with Special Reference to the Relations of Japan and Russia* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1953), 3-5.

<sup>81</sup> Harrison, *Japan’s Northern Frontier*, 17.

<sup>82</sup> Mid-level officials in the Political Section and Defense Attaché Office at the American Embassy, interview by author, Nagatcho, Tokyo, Japan, 25 June 2002.

<sup>83</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace, 1697-1985*, vol. 1 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 121.

arguments. Japanese officials regarded the islands as strategically significant only because the Soviets so regarded them.”<sup>84</sup>

While Japanese control over a demilitarized Kunashiri and Etorofu may have allowed U.S. attack submarines easier entry into the Sea of Okhotsk, the real strategic difference would have been negligible, especially considering the straits around the Northern Territories are choked by ice floes from December until April.<sup>85</sup> Only underwater nets, obstacles or mines could have been a serious challenge to a U.S. submarine seeking entry to the Sea of Okhotsk. Additionally, anything that keeps American attack submarines out of the Sea of Okhotsk will also keep out Russian strategic missile submarines. The two primary Russian Pacific Fleet bases are located outside of the Sea of Okhotsk: Vladivostok is on the Sea of Japan, and Petropavlovsk is located on the Pacific Ocean side of the Kamchatka Peninsula.<sup>86</sup> Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the corresponding decline in the Russian military, the strategic value of the four islands has become negligible for the Japanese. The Japan Defense Agency no longer considers Russia a threat, and no longer conducts exercises directed against Russian forces.<sup>87</sup>

## **2. Defense of ‘Lake Okhotsk’**

For Russia, the islands were at first seen as “stepping stones” to Japan and a means for indirect trade with the Japanese through the indigenous Ainu.<sup>88</sup> The fortifications built in the southern Kurils were intended to enforce the subjugation of the Ainu, and were not initially directed towards any threat, real or perceived, from the Japanese. The Ainu had resisted early Russian efforts on the Kurils, killing 21 of 39 members of a hunting expedition in 1771 on Uruppu. When the Russians took warships

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<sup>84</sup> Masato Kimura and David A. Welch, “Specifying ‘Interests’: Japan’s Claim to the Northern Territories and Its Implications for International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1998): 222. [emphasis in original]

<sup>85</sup> John J. Stephen, *The Kuril Islands: Russo-Japanese Frontier in the Pacific* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1974), 17.

<sup>86</sup> Kimura and Welch, “Specifying Interests,” 221.

<sup>87</sup> Researchers from the Russian Studies department at the National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS), interview by author, Ebisu, Tokyo, Japan, 2 July 2002.; American Embassy Tokyo, Interview.

<sup>88</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 65.

on further expeditions, it was for protection against the Ainu, and not the Japanese.<sup>89</sup> Any possible strategic importance of the island chain was not recognized by Russia until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century after the Crimean War with France and Britain, when the islands were recognized as potentially important for defending the Russian Far East, though Sakhalin was ultimately deemed more important.<sup>90</sup>

The islands were at the “junction of American, Russian and Japanese territory,” and achieved a new significance for Russia as their value was belatedly realized.<sup>91</sup> Between 1875 and 1945, the entire Kuril chain was possessed by the Japanese. Following the annexation of Korea in 1910, the Japanese controlled all the approaches to the Russian/Soviet Far East, the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan. After the Russian revolution, the Japanese regularly harassed Soviet ships attempting to pass through the islands to Siberia and Japanese fishermen regularly violated Soviet territorial waters.<sup>92</sup> Belatedly, the Soviets learned what Russian Admiral Stepan Makarov had understood prior to his death in the battle for Port Arthur: the Kuril Island chain was strategically important for the defense of Siberia.<sup>93</sup>

In 1945, before the advent of intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear bombers, long range nuclear powered strategic missile (SSBN) and attack (SSN) submarines and surface-to-air guided missiles, the islands held significant strategic value for the Soviets. As the post-war order began to emerge and the Soviets found themselves now in opposition to their former allies, all the islands, but especially the four closest to Japan, gained a new importance. Hiroshi Kimura quotes Nikita Khrushchev in a 1964 conversation with a delegation of Japanese socialists: “It should be kept in mind that the islands are of small economic value but of great strategic and defensive importance. We

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<sup>89</sup> George Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697-1875* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 70-71.

<sup>90</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 65, 88-90. Uruppu was the sight of a bizarre joint military operation by the British and French in 1855. The allies briefly occupied the island (which was uninhabited by a Russian garrison at the time) and declared it a joint possession of the British and French empires. It was renamed “l’Isle de l’Alliance” and the Kuril Islands were renamed the “Fog Archipelago.” After British and French flags were raised over the islands, the erstwhile conquerors abandoned their new possession to rejoin their respective fleets.

<sup>91</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 127-128.

<sup>92</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 130.

<sup>93</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 185.



are concerned with our own security.”<sup>94</sup> Kimura also mentions another 1964 episode where Soviet First Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan told former Japanese Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato that the islands could not be returned because they were “a gateway to Kamchatka.”<sup>95</sup> Khrushchev mentioned the Kurils and Northern Territories as he dictated his memoirs, though he seemed to have a change of heart regarding their strategic importance: “In these days of modern military technology, the islands really have very little value for defense.”<sup>96</sup> Perhaps this was because he was talking in hindsight, or was simply mistaken regarding the circumstances surrounding the 1956 normalization negotiations between the Japanese and Soviets. Regardless, dictating in 1969 he showed his concern about the islands: “It would have been sheer folly to relinquish the islands to Japan when the country was essentially under American occupation. We figured the minute we gave Japan the two islands, the United States would turn them into military bases.”<sup>97</sup>

In fact, the islands increased in strategic importance for the Soviets as the Cold War heated up in the late 1970’s and Delta II SSBN’s were deployed to the Petropavlovsk naval base on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The Soviets adopted a “bastion” strategy, where the Sea of Okhotsk would be the primary operating area for SSBN’s and the Soviet Navy mission would be to defend the sea from intrusion by U.S. Navy forces.<sup>98</sup> The Sea of Okhotsk was to be a Soviet lake, impenetrable to U.S. forces. Through the 1980’s Soviet military presence on the Northern Territories was increased substantially to eventually include a regiment of MIG-31 fighter aircraft, an armor

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<sup>94</sup> Hiroshi Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Brezhnev and Andropov*, vol. 1 of *Distant Neighbors* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 70.

<sup>95</sup> Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Brezhnev and Andropov*, 70.

<sup>96</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes*, trans. and ed. Jerrold L. Schecter (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 89.

<sup>97</sup> Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 89. Khrushchev is referring to Shikotan and the Habomais. The context of the quote is a discussion on the 1956 normalization negotiations between Japan and the Soviet Union. In the passage, he admits the strategic defensive value of the islands was not great with the advent of new weaponry, however, the quote is instructive to note that whatever the inconsistencies with what Khrushchev may have said earlier, he still viewed Soviet-Japanese relations as a function of U.S.-Soviet relations. Khrushchev’s memoirs must be taken with a grain of salt, however, as they contain frequent historical inaccuracies, though this may be because they were dictated in secret on the basis of memory after the fact without the benefit of reference material.

<sup>98</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace, 1985-1998*, vol. 2 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 530.

division on Etorofu and an infantry battalion on Kunashiri as well as early warning radars and an underwater acoustic monitoring station on Etorofu.<sup>99</sup> Until 1991, the islands maintained their important role in the Soviet “bastion” of ‘Lake Okhotsk.’

After 1991, the strategic value of the islands disappeared with the Soviet Union. Although Russian Ministry of Defense officials have continued to insist the islands are strategically important to Russia, lack of funding, poor morale and deteriorating assets are quickly making the strategic argument a moot point.<sup>100</sup> If current trends continue, it will not be long before the Russian Pacific Fleet will not have any strategic assets left to protect. Because of poor maintenance and lack of funds for refueling, service lives for Russia’s SSBN’s have been cut from the designed 25-30 years to 10-15 years.<sup>101</sup> In 1990, the Soviet Union had 24 operational SSBN’s in the Pacific Fleet, yet 10 years later that number has been reduced to 11, not all of which are operational.<sup>102</sup> The bastion strategy of the Russian Navy is a relic of the Cold War that is no longer valid in the current international situation of cooperation between Russia and the United States. Russia is not considered a serious threat by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Pacific Fleet exercises are no longer based around countering the Soviet or Russian Fleet. While the islands would have been strategically useful to the United States at the height of the Cold War, this is no longer the case. Any Russian argument that the islands are still strategically valuable is hollow, and perhaps indicative of wishful thinking that the United States or Japan still considers the Russian Navy a strategic threat within its own right.

### **C. ECONOMIC VALUE**

Neither Russia nor Japan has seriously made the argument that economic value is at the heart of the territorial dispute but the economic value of the islands cannot be ignored. The water around the islands is central to the economies of Northern Hokkaido and the

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<sup>99</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 530.

<sup>100</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 533-534

<sup>101</sup> Mikhail Pogorely, “Russian Nuclear Triad After 9/11: Prospects of the Strategic Nuclear Forces Development in the Context of the New U.S.-Russian Relations” (paper presented at the Naval Postgraduate School Conference on Russian Security Policy and the War on Terrorism, Monterey, CA, June 2002), 5.

<sup>102</sup> “Russia: START I Treaty SLBM and SSBN Tables,” Monterey Institute of International Studies Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey, CA 11 May 2000 [cited 28 August 2002], available at [www.nti.org/db/nisprofs/russia/Russia Nuclear Weapons SSBN Force START Tables.htm](http://www.nti.org/db/nisprofs/russia/Russia%20Nuclear%20Weapons%20SSBN%20Force%20START%20Tables.htm); INTERNET.

Russian Far East, and while not central to the dispute itself, it is economic issues that most frequently arise in the region.

## **1. Fisheries**

The primary industry on and surrounding the disputed islands is fishing and the harvesting of other marine life, such as crab. Fisheries negotiations were among the first relations between the Soviet Union and Japan following the Second World War, and have generally served as an open line of communication between the two governments. Presently, both Japanese and Russians fish the waters surrounding the “Northern Territories,” legally and illegally. The waters surrounding the islands are a mixing area for warm currents coming from the Sea of Japan with colder currents coming from the Sea of Okhotsk. Consequently, as a Japanese pamphlet from Hokkaido notes, “it is a treasure trove of marine life, including salmon, cod, herring, king crab, and scallops.”<sup>103</sup> The region is also known for a special type of seaweed (Chīshima nori) that was considered a delicacy, and until 1945, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomais provided 80 percent of the kelp used in Japanese cooking.<sup>104</sup> Prior to World War II, the region provided roughly ten percent of the Japanese catch, and at the end of the Soviet period, the region amounted to approximately eight percent of the considerable Soviet world-wide catch as well.<sup>105</sup>

In the mid-1970’s a new issue arose concerning fisheries that followed world-wide negotiations over undersea mineral resources. A 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was unilaterally established by several states (including the United States in 1976) and was eventually enshrined within Articles 55 through 58 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).<sup>106</sup> This has had the effect of making the islands individually more valuable. This is especially true for Shikotan and the Habomais whose return would have the greatest effect on the Japanese

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<sup>103</sup> “Our half century long appeal for Justice,” pamphlet in Japanese, Russian and English, (City of Nemuro, n.d.); Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 122.

<sup>104</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 123. Seaweed and kelp are a staples in the Japanese diet. Seaweed in various forms is used as a wrapping for rice, sushi rolls, or as an addition to soups. Kelp is most often used as a soup base or seasoning and is soaked to make a type of bullion, though the kelp itself is not eaten.

<sup>105</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 528.

<sup>106</sup> Louis Henkin, Richard Crawford Pugh, Oscar Schachter and Hans Smit, *International Law: Cases and Materials*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1993), 1288-1293.

EEZ because of their location east of both Hokkaido and Kunashiri. Since 1985, however, Japan and the Soviet Union/Russia have agreed on the same quotas in fishing negotiations, with Japan paying a premium price for fish in excess of the quota.<sup>107</sup>

## **2. Economic Threat**

The greatest problem now facing both Japan and Russia with respect to fisheries is the effect of poachers. Russian sources estimate as of 2001, Russian-owned vessels were responsible for the smuggling into Japan of anywhere from \$1 to \$3 billion worth of fish and other marine resources, according to various Russian sources.<sup>108</sup> Japanese poachers have also been active in Russian-claimed territorial water. The Russian Federal Border Service (FPS) alleged in 1993 that there were 1,912 instances of Japanese poachers violating Russian-claimed waters.<sup>109</sup> Many of these poachers operated with impunity using fast, modern ships that the Russian FPS could not catch.<sup>110</sup> Although the official numbers of violations have dropped (one article claims this is because the FPS began firing on suspected poachers), the reason may be less compliance by the Japanese than complicity of the FPS. In an article written for *Izvestia* with the assistance of *Hokkaido Shimbun*, Russian Duma member Boris Reznik details how the State Committee on the Fishing Industry, whose chairman is former-governor of Primorskii Krai Yevgeni Nazdratenko, and commanders of the FPS have been complicit in both Russian and Japanese poaching. Reznik writes that a “fishing Mafia” has developed where the border guards are used to put pressure on competitors, Russian monitors on Japanese ships are bribed to allow over-fishing, and in a specific example, 11 metric tons of “confiscated” crab (valued at \$10-12 per kilogram) was turned over to a single military unit “to improve their collective rations” over the course of 2001.<sup>111</sup> While there has been

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<sup>107</sup> Hiroshi Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Gorbachev and Yeltsin*, vol. 2 of *Distant Neighbors* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 241. Payments to Russia are officially in the form of contributions “to protect marine resources.” Hasegawa, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 509.

<sup>108</sup> Vasily Golovnin, “Sea Sickness,” trans. FBIS, *Izvestia*, 25 July 2002, FBIS Doc ID CEP20020725000155.; Maria Beloklokov, “Japanese Have Built Whole Cities on Fish,” trans. FBIS, *Izvestia*, 16 July 2002, FBIS Doc ID CEP20020716000246. These figures are inclusive for the entire Kuril chain, and not just the “Northern Territories.”

<sup>109</sup> Vladimir Mokhov, “Whom the Japanese Shores Beckon,” trans. FBIS, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 March 2002, FBIS Doc ID CEP20020319000333.

<sup>110</sup> William F. Nimmo. *Japan and Russia: A Reevaluation in the Post-Soviet Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994, 130.

<sup>111</sup> Boris Reznik, “Mafia and the Sea,” trans. FBIS, *Izvestia*, 17 July 2002, FBIS Doc ID

improvement in communications between the Japanese Coast Guard and the Russian FPS since a 1998 agreement, the increased prosecutions of Russian and Japanese poachers may only reflect a selective elimination of competition on the Russian side, if Reznik's information is accurate.<sup>112</sup> The ultimate victim will be both Japanese and Russians, because if the current level of over harvesting is sustained then the marine resources of the entire Kuril chain will be depleted, with devastating effects upon the economies of coastal Hokkaido and the Russian Far East.

### **3. Other Value**

As for the islands themselves, there is little of significant economic value. The islands do not contain any natural gas or oil deposits, and while there are some mineral deposits and timber resources on Kunashiri and Etorofu, the cost of extraction would likely exceed any possible profit that could be made. Taken as a whole, the resources “would only marginally supplement Hokkaido's ... resources.”<sup>113</sup> The islands have very limited infrastructure, and there is almost no industry. The islanders all depend either directly or indirectly on the fishing industry, and the only operational industrial plant remaining is one seafood processing factory on Etorofu.<sup>114</sup> Of the rest of the Soviet-built industrial facilities, they have either fallen into disrepair or were destroyed in a 1994 earthquake that inflicted extensive damage on Kunashiri and Shikotan.<sup>115</sup>

While the islands may not be economically valuable, there is a possibility for some economic development outside of the fishing industry if the territorial dispute is ever resolved. The Northern Territories are located “along one of the most volatile sections of the Pacific ‘rim of fire,’” and contain an unusually diverse array of vegetation, hot springs and natural attractions. During the Soviet era, Kunashiri and Etorofu were popular destinations for tourists from the Soviet Far East because of their extended summers and numerous hot springs.<sup>116</sup> With the rise of eco-tourism throughout the

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CEP20020724000354.

<sup>112</sup> Mokhov, “Whom the Japanese Shores Beckon.”; Reznik, “Mafia and the Sea.”

<sup>113</sup> Kimura and Welch, “Specifying Interests,” 218.

<sup>114</sup> Hiroshi Kimura, “Islands Apart,” *Look Japan*, February 2001 [cited 22 April 2002], available at [www.lookjapan.com/Lbcoverstory/01FebCS.htm](http://www.lookjapan.com/Lbcoverstory/01FebCS.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>115</sup> Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Gorbachev and Yeltsin*, 268-270.

<sup>116</sup> Stephen, *The Kuril Islands*, 12-17.

world, the islands could likely become economically self-sustaining on the basis of a revived tourism industry. The lack of infrastructure and economic development coupled with the relatively unspoiled natural state of much of the islands could prove attractive for tourists in search of exotic destinations. Additionally, the Japanese have a particular love for unique hot springs (onsen), and considering the number of remote inns and springs that survive throughout Japan, a revival of hot springs on the larger islands could bring Japanese tourists as well. But these prospects lie in the distant future, awaiting resolution of the territorial dispute and the free travel that only full normalization of relations between Russia and Japan can bring.

#### **D. VALUABLE, BUT...**

There is no disputing the islands have economic value. The territorial seas and the EEZ that accompany the islands total 196,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and contain some of the richest fishing grounds in the world.<sup>117</sup> Both Russia and Japan rely extensively on the fishing industry, and fish is the primary staple for the Japanese. Therefore, possession of the islands would be important for either country. However, under current agreements both Japanese and Russian fishermen ply the extent of the Kuril chain, including the waters surrounding islands that are not disputed. There is no reason to believe this situation would change if either the Northern Territories were reverted to Japan or if the Japanese were to eventually give up their claim. The disputed islands themselves are of little economic value, and while they could be economically self sufficient (which they currently are not), they will never provide riches to either Japan or Russia. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the islands have lost any strategic value they once had, and few Russians seriously believe either the United States or Japan would ever try to invade the Russian Far East in the future. Therefore, there must be some other explanation for why four small, sparsely inhabited islands provoke such an acrimonious debate and have prevented the final resolution of the Second World War. The next several chapters will show how it is intangible issues of pride and symbolism that prolong the dispute.

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<sup>117</sup> Kimura and Welch, "Specifying Interests," 219.

## IV. DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS IN RUSSIA AND JAPAN

### A. PUBLIC OPINION, MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS AND THE MEDIA

Public opinion has been enlisted by both sides in the Kuril Islands dispute to support their positions. Positions are often staked out via the media, an entity that is simultaneously an influence on and a reflection of “public opinion.” In Russia, any hint of the possibility of returning the disputed islands to Japan is denounced in the press as something akin to treason.<sup>118</sup> Although the Russian press is nominally free, stories are rarely written in an objective way. Direct criticism of the government is rare. In Japan, however, nearly every official or semi-official announcement is scrutinized by media sources as signs of progress towards a return of the islands. Although the mainstream Japanese press is usually more objective than the Russian, the Northern Territories dispute remains a sensitive national issue. The net effect has raised hopes among the Japanese public for restoration of the Northern Territories that cannot be realized in the near future.<sup>119</sup>

Public opinion is a relatively new factor in Russian politics. Until 1988 “the Russian public knew virtually nothing of Japanese demands for the Northern Territories.”<sup>120</sup> A perusal of recent stories indicates that little has been done within Russia to educate the population regarding the nature of the Japanese claims. Objective education is hampered by the fact that intense nationalism drives the coverage of the issue. The press of neither nation showcases its moderation when writing about the Kurils. Inflamed rhetoric is more usual than unbiased debate, which serves to limit the

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<sup>118</sup> Vasily Bubnov, “George Bush ‘Gives’ the Kuril Islands to Japan,” trans. Dmitry Sudakov, *Pravda*, 28 February 2002, [cited 7 March, 2002], available at [english.pravda.ru/main/2002/02/28/26709.html](http://english.pravda.ru/main/2002/02/28/26709.html); INTERNET.; Maria Tsetsikova, “Japan’s New FM Lands Igor Ivanov in Duma Dock,” *Gazeta*, 7 February 2002 [cited 24 April 2002], available at [www.europeaninternet.com/russia/frames/frames.php3?webnewsid=1224004](http://www.europeaninternet.com/russia/frames/frames.php3?webnewsid=1224004); INTERNET.

<sup>119</sup> “Mori Claims Dispute Progress,” *Mainichi Daily News*, 14 May 2001 [cited 27 April 2002], available at [www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html](http://www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html); INTERNET.; “Russian Foreign Minister Agrees to Negotiate Return of Islands,” *Mainichi Daily News*, 2 February 2002 [cited 27 April 2002], available at [www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html](http://www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html); INTERNET.; Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace, 1985-1998*, vol. 2 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 331.

<sup>120</sup> William F. Nimmo, *Japan and Russia: A Reevaluation in the Post-Soviet Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 129.

maneuvering room of politicians attempting to negotiate. It also hampers objective research of the issue. As a result, information from either Russian or Japanese media sources is always of questionable objectivity.

A gulf exists between individual and mass perceptions within Russia and Japan regarding each other. Although the two nations have shared a common official border since 1855, there has been relatively little contact between the two peoples on an individual level. One Japanese researcher has compared the situation to two neighbors who share a common backyard: they are neighbors, but they are more concerned with what happens on the street where their house faces. Consequently, they do not try hard to know the “backyard neighbor” because he is not important.<sup>121</sup> The dominant perceptions of each country toward the other have been formed principally through a history of warfare and conflict that has dominated bilateral relations between Japan and Russia in the twentieth century: the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, the Siberian Intervention from 1918-22, the “little wars” along the Manchurian/Mongolian borders in 1938-39, World War II from 1939-45, and the Cold War. Propagandistic denunciations have been common on both sides since the Russo-Japanese War, when the two populations came into mass contact for the first time. During that period, images of Russians as weak cowards and Japanese as monkeys or thieves that were somehow less than human were established in the respective national mindsets.<sup>122</sup> These images were reinforced among the Soviets during the Second World War as Stalin prepared to go to war against Japan and felt the need to justify his violation of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact. The Soviet invasion of Manchuria and the seizure of the Kuril Islands served to reinforce the commonly held Japanese belief that Russians are not trustworthy, a belief reinforced by Soviet treatment of Japanese POW’s, and more recently by Russian President Boris Yeltsin’s cancellation of two scheduled trips to Japan in the early 1990’s.<sup>123</sup> Japanese

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<sup>121</sup> Researchers from the Russian Studies section at the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), interview by author, Nagatcho, Tokyo, Japan, 4 July 2002.

<sup>122</sup> Yulia Mikhailova, “Japan and Russia: Mutual Images, 1904-05,” in *The Japanese and Europe: Images and Perceptions*, ed. Bert Edstrom (Richmond Surrey, UK: Japan Library [Curzon Press], 1989), 156-161.

<sup>123</sup> After the Japanese surrendered to the Soviets in Manchuria and Korea, Stalin ordered the 640,000 Japanese POW’s be sent to gulags (labor camps) throughout the Soviet Union. Repatriation was slow, and it took until 1956 for all the remaining POW’s in the Soviet Union to be returned. As many as 60,000 died while interned in the Soviet Union. This number is in addition to approximately 150,000 Japanese civilian



public opinion regarding Russia plummeted immediately following those incidents as the percentage of people who feel hostile to or suspicious of Russia increased from 69.5 percent to 79.6 percent in October 1992, and the percentage feeling favorable to Russia dropped from 25.4 percent to 15.2 percent.<sup>124</sup>

The media are now the driving force in both Russian and Japanese mutual perceptions, as polls consistently show the majority of Japanese and Russians get their information regarding the other from the television, radio and print media.<sup>125</sup> In Japan, this has had the effect of fueling distrust and negative perceptions, much as the extensive coverage given to crimes committed by members of the U.S. military in Okinawa impact U.S.-Japanese relations. Crimes allegedly committed by Russians, stories of the Russian mafia, or high-profile incidents in public locations have dominated the coverage of Russians in Japan.<sup>126</sup> These stories from within Japan are reinforced by coverage of incidents from within Russia. When several Japanese tourists were harmed following the Japanese victory over Russia in the first round of the 2002 World Cup, the incident received repeated coverage on NHK (Japanese public television) nightly news throughout the remainder of the tournament, adding to the impression that Russia is an unruly and dangerous place.

There should be little wonder that among the vast majority of Japanese who have little or no contact with real Russians, the dominant image of that country is negative. However, at least one survey suggests that the more day-to-day contact Japanese have on an individual level with Russian citizens, the more favorable their impressions become.<sup>127</sup> While the authors of that survey admit their hypothesis, “needs to be tested

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residents of Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, and Japanese occupied territories in Korea and Manchuria who disappeared during the brief Soviet involvement in the Pacific War. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace, 1697-1985*, vol. 1 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 70-73.

<sup>124</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 466.

<sup>125</sup> Joachim Glaubitz, *Between Tokyo and Moscow: The History of an Uneasy Relationship, 1972 to the 1990s* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 286-287.; Tsuneo Akaha and Anna Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Hokkaido: A Research Note,” analysis of public opinion survey conducted in Hokkaido Prefecture, Japan, October 2001 (Monterey Institute of International Affairs, Monterey, CA, 2002, photocopy), 9.

<sup>126</sup> Akaha and Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Hokkaido,” 9-10, 14.

<sup>127</sup> Akaha and Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Hokkaido,” 14.

on the basis of a larger, more representative sample,” the difference in opinions between those who have frequent contact and those who have no contact is significant. Nonetheless, the opinions of those respondents with no or infrequent contact generally correspond with official nation-wide public opinion surveys.<sup>128</sup> Japanese who have had contact often use words such as “friendly,” “honest,” “kind,” or “cheerful” to describe Russians, as opposed to those who only know Russians from the media, who more often use negative descriptors such as “dirty,” “noisy,” and “authoritarian.”<sup>129</sup> It will be interesting to see what effect – if any – increasing numbers of visits to Hokkaido by Russian commercial fishermen and merchants will have on the broader dynamic of Russo-Japanese relations. Unfortunately, as Hokkaido is relatively sparsely populated, it is likely that the only contact most Japanese might have with a Russian will be with one of the increasingly numerous Russian “hostesses” in night clubs and members’ clubs throughout Japan.<sup>130</sup> According to official statistics, while only 123 Russians entered on student visas in 1999, 2,925 Russians entered on “entertainer” visas, a situation that does not bode well for the image of Russians among Japanese.<sup>131</sup>

Increased contact with Russians is not the panacea for improved relations and a better image among the Japanese, however. There is increasingly a sense within Japan that Russia is not especially important to Japan economically, politically, or strategically.<sup>132</sup> Put another way, Russia and Russians just don’t matter. When there was a threat from the Soviet Union, there was interest in Russia. But ten years after the demise of the Soviet Union, there is little public interest. There is a lack of hard

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<sup>128</sup> Akaha and Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Hokkaido,” 10, 12-14; Glaubitz, *Between Tokyo and Moscow*, 286-292

<sup>129</sup> Akaha and Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Hokkaido,” 8.

<sup>130</sup> “Hostesses” in Japanese night clubs, bars or member’s clubs are women who men pay to talk to them. Payment may be in the form of over-priced drinks, or there may be an hourly rate for being in the club in addition to the price of drinks. In more respectable clubs the women fill a role similar to that of the traditional geisha, and will pour drinks, sing karaoke, and generally try to entertain the customer. Although they are not “prostitutes,” many of these women become mistresses of wealthy or regular clients. In the more seedy establishments, the “hostesses” are often little more than prostitutes. The general assumption in Tokyo is that all Russian women in the city are “hostesses.” *G.L.M.*

<sup>131</sup> Akaha and Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Hokkaido,” 5.

<sup>132</sup> Mid-level officials in the Political Section and Defense Attaché Office at the American Embassy, interview by author, Nagatcho, Tokyo, Japan, June 25, 2002.; Researchers from the Russian Studies department at the National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS), interview by author, Ebisu, Tokyo, Japan, 2 July 2002.; JIIA, Interview.

information or research covering this topic. However, anecdotal evidence lends strongly to such a hypothesis. One interviewee, a Russian expert and researcher at a MOFA-supported think-tank lamented the decline in funding for Russia-related research. He remarked that he felt fortunate being where he was, as many colleagues that had been heads of Russian language departments in Japanese universities have lost their jobs and their departments have been closed because of declining student interest in Russian language or affairs. Where 20 years ago there was enough interest to sustain at least one full year group in most large universities each year, this is no longer the case. The number of Russian studies departments has decreased substantially as students have gravitated towards other Asian languages to complement the required English. Those departments that remain often survive by renaming their courses so that Russia appears nowhere in the title or course description, focusing instead on “Pacific security” or environmental issues.<sup>133</sup> At the Japan Institute for International Affairs, the three research assistants for Russian Studies in 1997 had, by 2002, been reduced to only one. Considering the long period of poor relations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is unlikely that interest or goodwill towards Russia will increase substantially in Japan within the near term.

On the Russian side, there appears to be more goodwill towards the Japanese and Japan, irrespective of the territorial dispute. The reason why cannot be said for certain, however, it is likely the average Russian is more concerned with affairs in Europe and the West and simply does not think much about Japan. Interestingly, while Russians seem more willing to consider Russo-Japanese relations as friendly, over half of those surveyed in a nationwide survey were not aware that there was not a peace treaty between Japan and Russia.<sup>134</sup> In the Far East, a good general opinion of Japan and a greater desire for better relations ironically coexist with an increased resistance to the return of the Northern Territories, the primary impediment to better relations. The answer to this apparent paradox is the Russian hope for Japanese economic aid.<sup>135</sup> On the islands

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<sup>133</sup>JIIA, Interview.

<sup>134</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), “Survey in the Russian Federation on Opinions Toward Japan (Outline),” August 2001 [cited 01 May 2002], available at [www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/survey/2001.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/survey/2001.html); INTERNET.

<sup>135</sup> MOFA, “Survey in the Russian Federation on Opinions Toward Japan (Outline).”; John J. Stephen, “The Political and Economic Landscape of the Russian Far East,” in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa,

themselves, the picture is even less certain. While visiting the islands in 1999 and 2000, Hiroshi Kimura got the impression that, while the majority of islanders on Etorofu were against a return of the island to Japan, the majority on Shikotan favored return, while the population of Kunashiri was evenly split.<sup>136</sup> According to Kimura, the most distinct opinions expressed by inhabitants of all three islands were feelings that “they have been essentially abandoned by the Russian mainland and Sakhalin,” and that “if they are to survive, they feel they have no choice but to become integrated with the economic sphere of Nemuro and Hokkaido.”<sup>137</sup> While the validity of the desires for reversion of the islands to Japan may be in question, the feeling of being forgotten by the Russian mainland mirrors that of inhabitants in the Russian Far East that they have been forgotten by Moscow.<sup>138</sup>

The argument may be made (and is frequently made by Kimura) that the “Japanization” of the Kunashiri and Shikotan has already begun among those that have visited the islands. Residents already watch Japanese programs on their televisions, and get many of their supplies through trade with the Japanese in Hokkaido.<sup>139</sup> A desire for greater economic integration is shared by the Japanese residing in the northern parts of Hokkaido. These people pressured the government to accept a new fisheries arrangement along the lines of a proposal made by South Kuril District mayor Nikolai Pogidin that would allow Japanese fisherman access to the fishing grounds surrounding the Northern Territories.<sup>140</sup> Yet despite a shared desire for greater economic integration and resolution, the differences in opinion regarding how the dispute should be resolved are great.

To what extent the Russians think seriously about relations with the Japanese outside of the Far Eastern Territories, or how much they know about Japan is an open question. Although Japanese restaurants are gaining popularity in Moscow, true

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Jonathan Haslam and Andrew Kuchins, eds., *Russia and Japan: An Unresolved Dilemma Between Distant Neighbors* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 294.

<sup>136</sup> Hiroshi Kimura, “Islands Apart,” *Look Japan*, February 2001 [cited 22 April 2002], available at [www.lookjapan.com/Lbcoverstory/01FebCS.htm](http://www.lookjapan.com/Lbcoverstory/01FebCS.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>137</sup> Kimura, “Islands Apart.”

<sup>138</sup> Stephen, “The Political and Economic Landscape of the Russian Far East,” 288-289.

<sup>139</sup> NIDS, Interview.; Kimura, “Islands Apart.”

<sup>140</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 488-489.

knowledge of the Japanese, Japanese culture, and the territorial issue itself remain relatively low, and little has been done to educate the Russian population according to some Japan-based Russia experts.<sup>141</sup> Some Japanese groups have made efforts to “educate” the Russians on their own, including the MOFA, by publishing Northern Territories-related informational pamphlets in Russian and distributing them where possible. Many of these are decidedly biased, however, and the degree to which they may influence Russian readers is questionable.<sup>142</sup>

## **B. NATIONAL MYTHS**

The Northern Territories dispute has become virtually intractable, in large part because of the national myths held by the Japanese and Russian peoples regarding themselves, their nations and the territories. Central to the Japanese view is the concept of “inherent territory,” in which “the Japanese have always considered the Northern Territories a part of the four major islands that constitute Japan proper.”<sup>143</sup> “Inherent territories” are ones that have been “regarded historically and legally as part of that country alone, due to the fact that it has belonged to that country from ancient times without becoming the possession of any other nation.”<sup>144</sup> The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes a variation this argument in its web site devoted to the Northern Territories. It claims that “the ‘Kuril Islands’ that Japan renounced do not include Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan or Habomai islands, which had always been Japanese territories.”<sup>145</sup> There is historical support for this argument dating to the period immediately following occupation. At this time, local officials in Nemuro became concerned when they could not reach the inhabitants of the Northern Territories, which were under their local administration. No similar concern was shown by any Hokkaido authorities for residents on the other Kuril Islands or in Sakhalin because they fell under

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<sup>141</sup> JIIA, Interview.

<sup>142</sup> “Our half century long appeal for Justice,” pamphlet in Japanese, Russian and English, (City of Nemuro, n.d.); “Website of the Hokkaido Prefecture Government,” [cited 21 July 2002], available at [www.pref.hokkaido.jp](http://www.pref.hokkaido.jp); INTERNET.

<sup>143</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 512.

<sup>144</sup> Hiroshi Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Brezhnev and Andropov*, vol. 1 of *Distant Neighbors* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 58.

<sup>145</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), “Japan’s Northern Territories,” [cited 20 February 2002], available at [www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory); INTERNET.

the jurisdiction of the colonial administration rather than the home islands.<sup>146</sup> The Japanese government has made a determined effort to convince the Japanese population that Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomais were not renounced in the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco. For its part, the Ministry of Education has made the history of the Northern Territories dispute a required part of the middle and high school curricula.<sup>147</sup> The return of the islands has therefore assumed a psychological dimension for the Japanese, because they have been linked to the concept of the Japanese national identity. This concept is also closely tied to the form of ancestor worship practiced by the Japanese, in which visiting and caring for the graves of one's ancestors holds special importance, especially during the O-bōn festival (Festival of the Dead). The former residents of the Northern Territories and their descendants still have an important connection to the islands that will not decrease significantly until the passing of several generations.

A second “national myth” propagated by Japan concerns the idea of the islands as the last symbol of defeat from the Second World War. Resumption of national sovereignty was the main priority in the years following surrender, especially after the San Francisco Peace Treaty restored Japanese self-rule in 1951. After the United States returned Okinawa to Japanese rule in 1972, the Northern Territories became the last Japanese irredenta not administered in the past by the colonial office – as Sakhalin and the Kurils north of Etorofu always had been – still under “foreign occupation.” Masato Kimura and David Welch note that, “Japan has paid an opportunity cost for its steadfast insistence upon the return of the disputed islands which is difficult to explain [rationally] ... it is possible to explain the Japanese position only by noting the intrinsic value of the islands to Japan, which is best understood in terms of the importance of their recovery to the Japanese sense of identity.”<sup>148</sup>

Supporting the WWII myth is the idea, also promoted by the MOFA's Northern Territories website, that Japan was the victim of a perfidious attack and betrayal when the

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<sup>146</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 31.

<sup>147</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 32.

<sup>148</sup> Masato Kimura and David A. Welch, “Specifying ‘Interests’: Japan's Claim to the Northern Territories and Its Implications for International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1998): 217.

Soviets abrogated the Neutrality Pact and took advantage of the impending Japanese defeat aggressively to claim spoils of war for itself.<sup>149</sup> This claim is problematic, however, because it involves significant historical amnesia regarding Japan's own actions during World War II. In 1940 the Japanese were willing to break the Neutrality Pact if the Soviets were sufficiently weak. In Tsuyoshi Hasegawa's opinion, the "surprise attack" claim "served as a psychological means by which the Japanese acquired a sense of victimization, which served as a major excuse to avoid atonement for the Pacific War."<sup>150</sup> The events of World War II and the actions of Soviet forces, beginning with the attack in Manchuria and ending with the seizure of the Kurils, Shikotan and the Habomai Islets, are often seen and referred to as two separate and distinct wars, in which the events of one had no connection to the other.<sup>151</sup> Through this mechanism, the Japanese separate in their minds the behavior and actions of their forces from 1937 until August 15, 1945 from those of the Russians during August and September, 1945. This allows Tokyo to maintain a sense of moral justification when arguing for reversion of the territories.

World War II, or the Great Patriotic War as the Russians call it, has been incorporated into Russia's own national myths. The Kuril Islands are seen as spoils of war and Russia's justified reward for the tremendous sacrifice of its soldiers and peoples. Russians have traditionally seen themselves as "victims of foreign aggression, and Russia's expansion is a consequence of victories over foreign invaders."<sup>152</sup> Russia has always been an expansionist, even colonial, power. However, rather than follow the Western European model of a sea born empire, the Russians established a continental imperium. Therefore, contrary to the Japanese perceptions of illegitimate Russian colonial gains, Moscow believes that, "Russia cannot sacrifice or sell what is perceived to be Russian territory."<sup>153</sup> To do so would lead to a further erosion of the integrity of the

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<sup>149</sup> MOFA, "Japan's Northern Territories."

<sup>150</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace*, 71.

<sup>151</sup> NIDS, Interview.

<sup>152</sup> Yale Richmond, *From Nyet to Da: Understanding the Russians*, rev. ed. (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1998), 12.

<sup>153</sup> Graham Allison, Hiroshi Kimura and Konstantin Sarkisov, *Beyond Cold War to Trilateral Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Scenarios for New Relationships between Japan, Russia and the United States*, Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project (Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1992), 6.

Russian Motherland. This feeling has been accentuated with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the independence of many of its republics. This same concept is being invoked to justify the war in Chechnya: a “Domino Theory” encompassing the outlying regions of the Russian Federation that fears if one territory is allowed to secede, many others will follow. Additionally, if one part is let go, and is no longer “Russian,” the very nature of the Russian state could be called into question. Ivan Kovalenko captured this sentiment in 1988 when, as a member of the Communist Party Central Committee, he stated: “If the results of World War II are reviewed, a chain reaction will occur, and as a result, the ‘house’ called peace after the War will lean.”<sup>154</sup> It is in this vein that Russian journalists assert that “the islands will not become Japanese territory.”<sup>155</sup>

A specific justification used by Stalin for retention of the islands was revenge for defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Stalin made his aforementioned famous speech declaring the end of the Great Patriotic War, in which he invoked the seizure of Japanese territory as being final revenge for the humiliation suffered in 1905 and the Treaty of Portsmouth.<sup>156</sup> It is doubtful that these old wounds still fester except perhaps among extreme nationalists who call for the return of Alaska to Russia. But memories of past Russian defeat at Japanese hands played a large part in the propaganda used to justify incorporation of the islands into the Soviet Union. The value of the territories as spoils of war and now “inherent territory” of the Russian Federation still resonates strongly, and may explain why the Russians are able to turn over disputed land to China, but refuse to consider the same with Japan.<sup>157</sup> The true value of the islands to Russia, as for the Japanese, is symbolic. For this reason, the majority of both populations fall back on their national myths to legitimize their respective position on the

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<sup>154</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 67.

<sup>155</sup> Bubnov, “George Bush ‘Gives’ the Kuril Islands to Japan.”

<sup>156</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 28. Russians know of World War II as the Great Patriotic War.

<sup>157</sup> In the 2001 treaty between Russia and China, Russia and China reached agreement on most of their border, including two small islands in the Amur River. The islands were in the middle of the river, but sediment buildup has begun on the Chinese side, and eventually the islands may become attached to the Chinese shore. Some nationalists had threatened to dredge the Chinese side of the river to prevent this. In the sections of the border that are not defined by rivers, a give and take process has been proceeded, though the Chinese have gained slightly more than the Russians. Only appx. 50km of the Russo-Chinese border remains in dispute.



Kurils.<sup>158</sup> With arguments on both sides couched in largely moral terms, politicians are left little room for maneuver or compromise.

### **C. POLITICIANS AND POLITICS**

The interplay of domestic politics and foreign policy have had a profound effect on Russian and Japanese actions, and has prevented both from acting in what would otherwise be considered the interests of the state. Since the end of the Cold War, neither Russia nor Japan has had a head of state that was domestically secure. In Russia, Gorbachev was the first to lose his power base to a public opinion made unpredictable by the turmoil of democratization. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, neither Boris Yeltsin nor Vladimir Putin has been able to attract a firm base of independent domestic support. Both have had to resort to courting nationalist allies to maintain their respective holds on power. Putin has managed so far to maintain high approval ratings during his time in office. But considering his rapid rise to power from relative obscurity, he may not yet have the standing to force a potentially unpopular decision through the Duma. For its part, Japan has had nine different Prime Ministers during the financially and politically turbulent 1990's. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi saw his stratospheric approval ratings get cut in half overnight from around 80 percent to just above 40 percent when he fired the domestically popular foreign minister, Makiko Tanaka. Despite Tanaka's own fall from power and resignation from Parliament amid allegations of corruption, Koizumi's popularity ratings remain low as of August 2002, so it appears Koizumi's initially high popularity may have been an aberration. Additionally, the LDP does not seem able to produce a strong, dynamic leader through its internal processes because of the compromises necessary to gain a leadership position within the party, which is necessary to become Prime Minister. Without firm support, neither leader can negotiate or compromise substantially on the Northern Territories, despite the benefits that could be brought to both through resolution of the issue and settlement of a final peace treaty. To answer the question of why these two states cannot come to an agreement on common interests, it is necessary to look at factors below the state level.

Nationalism has been on the rise in both Russia and Japan, finding new power in times of political and economic stress in both countries. Within Russia, the Northern

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<sup>158</sup> Kimura, *Japanese-Russian Relations Under Brezhnev and Andropov*, 55.

Territories provide an easy emotional issue for rallying support. In the words of one Ukrainian military officer on his former countrymen, “Russians think of themselves as a great power, and great powers don’t give up territories.”<sup>159</sup> A good example is an episode that occurred in February 2002, when the Duma mustered a majority to summon Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov to “answer one question: Is it true that the Russian leadership is planning to hand the Southern Kurils to Japan?”<sup>160</sup> The summons was prompted by a statement from then newly-appointed Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi. The Japanese press twisted her statement that she and Ivanov had agreed on preliminary negotiations over the disputed islands to imply that the Russian foreign minister had agreed to return the islands to Japan.<sup>161</sup> The resolution found the Communist deputy who initiated the motion receiving support from the infamous right-wing nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The announcement also provoked a spate of demonstrations in Sakhalin and a petition against returning the islands, though the islanders’ reactions are not mentioned.<sup>162</sup> Ivanov quickly dispelled Japanese hopes and Russian fears, firmly stating that no progress had been made and there was no change in the stalemate.<sup>163</sup> Regardless, if a peace treaty were signed that returned the islands to Japan, it would need to be ratified by two-thirds of the 178-member Federation Council. The Council is composed not only of regional executives, who are mostly aligned with Putin, but also of the more conservative and more nationalistic heads of regional parliaments. The likelihood of such a group ratifying a treaty returning all the islands is almost non-existent.<sup>164</sup>

Putin is not the only one who must deal with ardent nationalists. Japanese nationalists constitute one of Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s strongest support groups. This support has become more critical to Koizumi following his aforementioned dismissal of Foreign Minister Tanaka. Perhaps the most visible

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<sup>159</sup> LCOL Evgenii Akhmalidinov, Ukrainian Air Forces, conversation with author, 04 April, 2002.

<sup>160</sup> Tsetsikova, “Japan’s New FM Lands Igor Ivanov in Duma Dock.”

<sup>161</sup> “Russian Foreign Minister Agrees to Negotiate Return of Islands” *Mainichi Daily News*.

<sup>162</sup> Tsetsikova, “Japan’s New FM Lands Igor Ivanov in Duma Dock.”

<sup>163</sup> Valeriy Agarkov and Dina Pyanykh, “Minister Tells Duma No Progress With Japan on Disputed Islands,” *ITAR-TASS* wire service, 13 March, 2002.

<sup>164</sup> Steven Solnick, “Russian Regional Politics and the ‘Northern Territories’” (paper presented at the 1999 Miyazaki-Tokyo International Symposium, Tokyo, Japan, November 1999), 10.

expression of Koizumi's leanings have been his two visits to Yasukuni Shrine, where the remains of war criminals executed in the late 1940's – including General Hideki Togo – were enshrined in 1978. *The Economist* noted shortly after his latest visit on April 21<sup>st</sup>: “Mr. Koizumi ... is hardly the innocent victim of devious nationalists. Far from being forced to choose, he used the Yasukuni controversy to his advantage during his internal party campaign [in 2001]. By saying he would go there on the August 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he was able to appeal to nationalist supporters, helping him win the party presidency.”<sup>165</sup> What is often overlooked in the controversy is that, for many years, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was the only party whose territorial demands were confined to the Northern Territories. While most other parties demanded the return of all the Kuril Islands, some called for the return of Southern Sakhalin as well. Japan, like Russia, has been mired in economic recession since 1989, which has added to the political instability at the top of Japanese politics. Economic troubles often cause politicians to seek distractions to maintain support. During his internal campaign within the LDP to gain the post of prime minister, Koizumi co-opted a large portion of the “independents” that were leaning towards other candidates.<sup>166</sup> Many of his rivals were more nationalistic in outlook, such as Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara, author of the “anti-American diatribe,” *The Japan That Can Say No*.<sup>167</sup> The connection between nationalist sentiment and the territorial dispute remains strong. When it was revealed in December 2001 that former Hokkaido MP Muneo Suzuki apparently made a comment to the effect that “return of the islands would be of no benefit at all to the nation,” he was widely criticized by former residents, constituents in Hokkaido, the Foreign Ministry, and even the Prime Minister himself.<sup>168</sup> Ironically, Suzuki was often seen as the foremost advocate of the return of the islands. Yet one isolated comment led to nationwide criticism. Any

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<sup>165</sup> “The Politics of Nationalism,” *Economist*, 27 April – 03 May 2002, 40.

<sup>166</sup> The LDP is comprised of many factions, with most members of the party aligned to one faction or another. The factions are known by the politician leading each faction. For example, the largest current factions are the Hashimoto faction and the Mori faction, each led by former Prime Ministers. Prime Ministers and Cabinet posts used to rotate among the factions, although this is no longer the case because of greater media scrutiny. Koizumi rose to be Prime Minister with the support of unaligned LDP members, and through popular perception that he would be a strong reformer.

<sup>167</sup> “The Regions That Can Say No,” “A Survey of Japan,” 16 pp, *Economist*, 20-26 April 2002, 12.

<sup>168</sup> “Suzuki Hammered from All Sides Over Isles Remark,” *Asahi Shimbun*, March 13, 2002 [cited 24 April 2002], available at [www.asahi.com/english](http://www.asahi.com/english); INTERNET.

politician who promotes anything less than the return of all the Northern Territories can expect the same treatment. Such sentiment combined with weak national leaders offers little prospect of Japanese officials negotiating a compromise solution, especially as there is no political cost for continued stalemate.<sup>169</sup>

### **1. Personal Interference in Inter-State Relations**

If the respective leaders did not have enough problems in attempting negotiations regarding the Northern Territories, they are further hampered by the interference of regional politicians in state-to-state relations. In Japan this phenomenon is mostly a result of the nature of Japanese politics and the internal workings of the LDP, which occasionally has acted in a way not dissimilar from the Communist parties of China and the Soviet Union in its mingling of “state” with “party” interests. In some instances, the use of out-of-office politicians has set government policy. For instance, former-Prime Minister Nakasone was appointed envoy to Russia in 1993 to conduct negotiations in the place of elected or officially appointed (and accountable) Japanese leaders.<sup>170</sup> In general, this pattern has led to progress, as he was able to use his personal contacts and track record of trying to better Russo-Japanese relations to their advantage. For example, Nakasone was able to repair Russo-Japanese relationships following the two cancellations of the Yeltsin visit in 1993 through his ability to speak frankly with the Russian leader and to work out a mutually beneficial strategy for talks that would not undermine the domestic standing of the Japanese or Russian governments.<sup>171</sup> However, the common use of unaccountable envoys may confuse issues, since they have no official negotiating powers and do not speak in an official capacity.

There is a more sinister side to the involvement of “informal” actors in foreign policy, however, and that is the effect the *kuromaku* have on foreign policy negotiations. The *kuromaku* are Japanese politicians, often elected MPs but sometimes simply senior

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<sup>169</sup> Allison, Kimura and Sarkisov, *Beyond Cold War*, 39.

<sup>170</sup> Nakasone went more in his capacity as a high-ranking member of the LDP than as an envoy appointed by the Prime Minister or the Japanese Cabinet. Because he went in a less than official capacity, the Japanese government would not have lost face if the negotiations amounted to nothing. However, as head of one of the most powerful factions of the LDP, he wielded significant influence within the party. An American analogy would be a Republican president sending the head of the Republican party to negotiate with a foreign government in a private capacity rather than a Presidential Envoy, the Secretary of State, or a State Department functionary.

<sup>171</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 481.

LDP members, who operate behind the scenes and hold considerable power over governmental policies. Two notorious examples of this sort of politician are Shin Kanemaru and Muneo Suzuki, both of whom held undue influence in the MOFA. In 1990, it was revealed Kanemaru had been holding talks on his own with a high Soviet official, Evgenii Primakov, regarding the Northern Territories.<sup>172</sup> Kanemaru was arrested for influence-peddling in 1993, but one of his protégés, Muneo Suzuki, apparently soon took his place. Suzuki is an even better example, having declared many times “that the return of the Northern Territories was his ‘life’s work.’”<sup>173</sup> Through bellicose actions and statements, Suzuki established a special sway over the MOFA. Sometimes Suzuki was a protector of the bureaucrats, as in the frequent rows between former-Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka and Ministry officials. At other times, however, he would browbeat officials when he did not get his way, shouting or even physically assaulting them.<sup>174</sup> His influence among the MOFA was well known to Russian diplomats, who allowed him to select the Russians who would be invited to Japan through a youth exchange program.<sup>175</sup> When Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov visited Tokyo in February 2002, he met with Suzuki for further discussions at the end of his official itinerary, and not Prime Minister Koizumi or Foreign Minister Kawaguchi.<sup>176</sup> While Suzuki has been arrested for abuse of office, the problems of high level interference within the Japanese government still exist. It is possible that Suzuki was “offered up” by the LDP as a necessary sacrifice to placate public outrage after the dismissal of Tanaka, and not as a sincere attempt to curb abuses of authority.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 78-79.

<sup>173</sup> “Suzuki Hammered from All Sides Over Isles Remark,” *Asahi Shimbun*.

<sup>174</sup> “Well-connected Suzuki Rants His Way to the Top,” *Asahi Shimbun*, March 9, 2002 [cited 24 April 2002], available at [www.asahi.com/english/national/K2002030900343.html](http://www.asahi.com/english/national/K2002030900343.html); INTERNET.; “Surly Suzuki Clobbered Disobedient Foreign Ministry Official,” *Mainichi Daily News*, March 13, 2002 [cited 27 April 2002], available at [www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html](http://www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html); INTERNET.

<sup>175</sup> “Suzuki Exploits Japan-Russia Exchange Program,” *Mainichi Daily News*, March 2, 2002 [cited 27 April 2002], available at [www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html](http://www12.mainichi.co.jp/news/mdn/search-news/850232/northern20territories-0-19.html); INTERNET.

<sup>176</sup> “Well-connected Suzuki Rants His Way to the Top,” *Asahi Shimbun*.

<sup>177</sup> American Embassy, Tokyo, Interview.

Russia has its own problems with intrusive politicians seeking to exert influence in inter-state relations. The current and former governors of the Far Eastern provinces of Primorskii Krai, Khabarovskii Krai and Sakhalin Oblast have all been willing contributors to the ongoing stalemate. One example is the governor of Khabarovskii Krai, Victor Ishaev. He has often traveled to promote wider regional integration within North-East Asia. He has given speeches in South Korea highlighting the seemingly compatible comparative advantages possessed by Japan, China, Russia, and both North and South Korea and traveled to Japan as part of Putin's entourage.<sup>178</sup> However, his actions often suggest a semi-independent foreign policy different from that of Moscow, one that promotes different goals. Although he has come out against territorial transfers from Russia in the disputes with both China and Japan, he also apparently has a pragmatic side and at least recognizes that "The present government of Japan is in the [sic] difficult situation ... Neither in Russia, nor in Japan the political situation has matured yet to decide the territorial problem."<sup>179</sup> His compatriots have been less helpful or understanding.

Perhaps the most notorious of the Russian regional actors is the former governor of Primorskii Krai, Evgenii Nazdratenko, who is still trying to maintain some of his power in his current position as chairman of the Russian Fisheries Committee. Appointed by Yeltsin in 1993, Nazdratenko used a "nationalist theme and foreign policy issues to distract attention from the autocracy and economic collapse that ... characterized his rule of the province."<sup>180</sup> Fashioning himself into the "defender of Russia's Far-Eastern borders," he has variously called for transfer of the Northern Territories to Primorskii Krai and threatened to dispatch his "Cossack" army to the islands to "defend" them from

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<sup>178</sup> Victor Ishaev, "Recent Trends in the World Political Situation, Globalization and Prospects for Cooperation in the Energy Sector in Northeast Asia" (speech given at the "Energy Security and Sustainable Development in Northeast Asia: Prospects for Cooperative Policies" workshop, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 29 March 2002) [cited 22 April 2002], available at [www.adm.kvh.ru/Invest2.nsf/2dfba8b2d0bf2470ca256524001a00c6/d0a05be2483338b0ca256b91007efb6a?OpenDoc](http://www.adm.kvh.ru/Invest2.nsf/2dfba8b2d0bf2470ca256524001a00c6/d0a05be2483338b0ca256b91007efb6a?OpenDoc); INTERNET.

<sup>179</sup> "Victor Ishaev About the Statement of the Prime Minister of Japan," Press release, Press Center of the Khabarovskii Krai Government, 11 February 2002 [cited 22 April 2002], available at [www.adm.kvh.ru/Invest2.nsf/2dfba8b2d0bf2470ca256524001a00c6/57ac0cd58370e09cca256b5d00067960?OpenDocument](http://www.adm.kvh.ru/Invest2.nsf/2dfba8b2d0bf2470ca256524001a00c6/57ac0cd58370e09cca256b5d00067960?OpenDocument); INTERNET.

<sup>180</sup> Solnick, "Russian Regional Politics and the 'Northern Territories,'" 5.

the Japanese.<sup>181</sup> It is possible his appointment to head the fisheries committee was a cover to move him out of Primorskii Krai where he could be more closely watched and in a position where he must promote Moscow's interests.

The successive governors of Sakhalin, while less extreme, have taken similar stands as Nazdratenko. Igor Farkhutdinov has followed similar policies as his predecessor and is a leading force in protests against Moscow whenever the islands are discussed. There are varied explanations for his positions: Kimura sees opposition in Sakhalin as a combination of a Soviet hangover among the oblast leadership, psychological insecurity over being bypassed in negotiations between Moscow and Tokyo, and a fear of losing a "means of eliciting economic cooperation [from Japan] indefinitely,"<sup>182</sup> while Steven Solnick sees a combination of the familiar appeal to a domestic base and opposition as a "tactic for extracting greater economic resources or privileges from the federal government."<sup>183</sup> Regardless of his motives, Farkhutdinov apparently shares a concern with many of his constituents, which is that Moscow has neglected the Far East while exploiting it, and if Sakhalin is to prosper, more control over resource development projects must remain in the province. Protests over the islands may be the only way the Far East can get attention from Moscow.

As for the rest of Russia, the Northern Territories hold symbolic value, but day-to-day survival is often the more pressing concern. Additionally, greater economic integration with Japan is desired by all three current Far Eastern governors, regardless of their statements concerning the disputed territories. The dispute has been used extensively for political gain and to deflect attention from the disastrous economic conditions in the region, crumbling infrastructure, and general destitution of the population. The 4.9% increase in GDP from 2001 through 2002 (as measured by *The Economist*) has not significantly touched the Far East, which is one reason for the strength of nationalist sentiment in the region. Kimura attributes this to how "in many cases, people will identify with a strong state as a way of compensating for their lack of wealth ... [and that] it's not unusual to find the strongest nationalistic sentiments among

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<sup>181</sup> Solnick, "Russian Regional Politics and the 'Northern Territories,'" 5-6.

<sup>182</sup> Kimura, "Islands Apart."

<sup>183</sup> Solnick, "Russian Regional Politics and the 'Northern Territories,'" 3-4.

the very poorest of the poor.”<sup>184</sup> Considering current conditions, the Northern Territories will continue to be a popular distraction for the populace in the foreseeable future.

A similar situation exists in Japan, though the economy is not in such dire straits as Russia. The economy is, however, the most pressing issue, though there is no one in the government willing to take the necessary steps to reform the current system. Yet the problem with reforming the system, is that those who have benefited most are the ones still in power within the LDP.<sup>185</sup> Koizumi came to power by promising reform, and he has been defeated in every attempt to implement his reforms. After ten years of economic stagnation, however, the Japanese public may not remain content with mere distractions.

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<sup>184</sup> Kimura, “Islands Apart.”

<sup>185</sup> American Embassy, Tokyo, Interview.



## **V. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT RELATIONS**

### **A. PROGRESS AND STALEMATE**

With Russian and Japanese public opinion, perceptions, myths, and politicians holding such diametrically opposed views on the Kuril issue, Russo-Japanese negotiations would seem to be deadlocked. However, since 1989, both sides have inched towards greater mutual cooperation. It can be argued that, with the exception of the resolution of the territorial dispute, most realistic near-term policy goals of both states are being accomplished. This has been especially true since 1997 when Japan officially adopted a “multi-layered approach” toward Russia, emphasizing expansion of areas of cooperation outside the boundaries of the Northern Territories issue.<sup>186</sup> This increasing cooperation can easily be seen in the areas of fisheries, resource development, and environmental issues. Additionally, a start has been made on military-to-military relations, as well as some increased economic cooperation. However, as this chapter will argue, there is a limit to the amount of cooperation possible. The boundaries on cooperation are due in part to the territorial dispute. But, even without the Northern Territories issue, there are other constraints on the development of closer Russo-Japanese relations.

### **B. COOPERATION VERSUS FRICTION**

Even before the Second World War, fisheries had already become the traditional issue of contention between the Russians and Japanese. During the 1920's and 30's, Japanese fishermen would regularly violate Soviet territorial waters while in the company of Imperial Navy warships. This tradition was reversed after the war, with the Soviets preventing Japanese fishermen from using many traditional fishing grounds, especially those surrounding the islands now called the “Northern Territories.” Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the primary economic value of the territories has nothing to do with mineral resources, but lies in the abundant sea life surrounding the islands. The Japanese are the largest per-capita consumers of fish in the world, and the loss of a major fishing area was felt almost immediately following the war, when Japan was plagued by severe

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<sup>186</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace, 1985-1998*, vol. 2 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 503-504.

food shortages. Fisheries, therefore, became the first area in which Tokyo sought to establish cooperation with the Soviets after World War II. While the first fishing negotiations in 1956 can hardly be called “cooperation,” Japanese concern over fishing rights has been the one consistent topic of diplomatic conversation between Russia and Japan.<sup>187</sup>

The waters around the Northern Territories have gradually been opened to Hokkaido fishermen, first through “private” arrangements for the collection of seaweed from around the Habomai islands through the most recent 1998 fishing accord. This was based upon a 1994 proposal by Nikolai Pogidin, head of the South Kuril District Administration, in which the two sides “decided to shelve the issue of jurisdiction” and agreed on fees to be paid “for the protection of marine resources.”<sup>188</sup> Since then, the two states have increased their level of cooperation to include a ban on fishing by third countries, much to the chagrin of the South Koreans.<sup>189</sup> The Japanese have also begun to buy fish roe (caviar) directly from Russia. Until 2002, the Japanese bought Russian fish roe from Russia through Norwegian brokers.<sup>190</sup> Even this very pragmatic arrangement is surrounded by diplomatic face-saving measures, however. Rather than a straight-forward commercial transaction, the Japanese pay fees to Russia “in the name of protecting marine resources.” Also, only a limited number of Japanese fishing cooperatives participate.<sup>191</sup> This means that poaching remains a major problem, as Russians attempt to control Japanese access to the fisheries. Many poachers operate with near impunity, using modern vessels that can easily outrun the deteriorating Russian coast guard boats that patrol the waters around the Northern Territories. Nor do the Japanese act firmly to prevent illegal fishing. As one Japanese writer noted: “A salmon is a salmon. There is no way of discerning which fish is caught where.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Hasegawa, *Between War and Peace, 1697-1985*, vol. 1 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 122.

<sup>188</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 490, 612n(47); .

<sup>189</sup> Heo Yong-beum, “Russia and Japan to Sign Fishing Ban Off Kuril,” *Digital Chosun*, November 27, 2001 [cited April 27, 2002], available at <http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200110/200110100250.html>; INTERNET.

<sup>190</sup> “Japan Offers to Buy Fish From Russia,” *Interfax* wire service, February 23, 2002.

<sup>191</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 509.

<sup>192</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 168, quoting Manabe Toshiki, *Shūkan Shincho*, 29 October 1992.

Environmental issues also play an increasing role in Russo-Japanese relations, as the Japanese are forced to confront the Soviet legacy of environmental devastation, especially with regards to radioactive waste. The issue was brought into the consciousness of the average Japanese when NHK broadcast a tape of the Russian tanker *Amur*, dumping liquid radioactive waste into the Sea of Japan. Japan has responded with increased economic assistance for the construction of a liquid radioactive waste processing facility located at the Zvezdochka shipyard in Primorskii Krai on the Sea of Japan coast.<sup>193</sup> Otherwise, however, the Japanese have not shown a high level of interest in the environmental problems on their border, which is rather surprising given Japan's experience at the end of World War II, and the ticking nuclear time bomb that lies just across the Sea of Japan.

At least two spent nuclear reactors have been dumped into the Sea of Japan during the Soviet period, in addition to the liquid waste that has been repeatedly deposited in both the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk.<sup>194</sup> In the post-Soviet period, the Russian Navy has had the responsibility of dismantling its decommissioned nuclear submarines. But because decommissioning efforts have to compete for scarce funds with the operational fleet, they get low priority. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia has decommissioned approximately 160 nuclear submarines, just under half of which were in the Pacific Fleet. Even if decommissioning of nuclear ships were a priority, the Russian Navy does not have the funds properly to make these submarines safe. Most, in fact, are still sitting in the water awaiting surgery.<sup>195</sup> The problem will only worsen with time as more submarines are decommissioned and waste storage tanks, already filled to capacity, can no longer absorb nuclear waste. The Mayak processing facility near Chelyabinsk, in Central Russia near Kazakhstan, is currently the only facility processing waste from

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<sup>193</sup> James Clay Moltz and Tamara C. Robinson, "Dismantling Russia's Nuclear Subs: New Challenges to Non-Proliferation," *Arms Control Today* 29, no. 4, (1999) [cited April 22, 2002], available at [www.armscontrol.org/act/1999\\_06/subjun99.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999_06/subjun99.asp); INTERNET.

<sup>194</sup> Thomas Nilsen and Nils Bohmer, *Sources of Radioactive Contamination in Russian Counties of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk*. Online report, (Norway: Bellona Foundation, 1994), ch. 4.2.3 [cited 18 September 2001], available at [www.bellona.no/imaker?id=9845&sub=1](http://www.bellona.no/imaker?id=9845&sub=1); INTERNET.

<sup>195</sup> Alexander A. Pikayev, Elena N. Nikitina and Vladamir Kotov, "Harmful Legacies and Dangerous Weaknesses" in *Russia and the West: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security Environment*, ed. Alexei G. Arbotov (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 212.

nuclear submarines. There is a tremendous backlog of material to be processed, and the facility itself is an environmental disaster.<sup>196</sup>

Japanese disinterest may be explained by a cultural hesitance to deal with what is considered the faults of others. Admittedly, it is not only Japan that has failed effectively to engage the Russians on nuclear threat reduction issues. Most Europeans seem little concerned about Russia's nuclear disposal problem all the more surprising given the panic produced by the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster of 1986. Despite stated willingness by President Putin to cooperate with other countries on the nuclear issue, ironically, only the United States has seriously and proactively engaged Russia in seeking to protect nuclear materials and assist in disposal.<sup>197</sup> The events of September 11 should have been a wake up call to Japan that it should be worrying not only about environmental degradation, but also about terrorism. Regardless, the issue should be paramount to the Japanese, since any environmental damage to the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk could threaten a significant portion of Japan's food supply. One American official in Tokyo summed up the Japanese attitude as follows: "Japan is like an ostrich with its head in the sand. It doesn't react unless something comes and kicks it in the butt. Otherwise it pretends everything is fine."<sup>198</sup>

Resource development in the Far East is an area of relatively extensive and long lasting cooperation between Tokyo and Moscow, despite a lack of significant progress in the actual extraction of resources. In 1981, there were 5 planned projects ranging from forestry development to oil and natural gas extraction in the Far East and Sakhalin.<sup>199</sup> By the end of the Cold War, only the natural gas development projects on Sakhalin remained (although two timber projects had been carried through), and these made slow progress from planning to extraction phases.<sup>200</sup> Though the projects have just begun to come into

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<sup>196</sup> Peter Gizweski, "Military Activity and Environmental Security: The Case of Radioactivity in the Arctic," *Northern Perspectives* 21, no. 4 (1993-94) [cited 17 September 2001], available at [www.carc.org/pubs/v21no4/military.htm](http://www.carc.org/pubs/v21no4/military.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>197</sup> "Getting What You Pay For," *Economist*, 27 June 2002 [cited 03 August, 2002], available at [www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story\\_ID=1200670](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=1200670); INTERNET.

<sup>198</sup> American Embassy Tokyo, Interview.

<sup>199</sup> Hiroshi Kimura, "Soviet Foreign Policy toward Japan: Linkages between Domestic and International Determinants," SNU/ISS seminar paper. Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University (Seoul, Korea: Seoul National University, 1981), 83.

<sup>200</sup> Joachim Glaubitz, *Between Tokyo and Moscow: The History of an Uneasy Relationship, 1972 to*

operations after many years, the deposits are considered extensive and may be able to provide a significant percentage of Japan's natural gas needs in the future as well as lift the dismal regional economy.<sup>201</sup> Whether these deposits will justify the extensive investment remains to be seen, however. As of the mid 1990's, Japan had invested over \$200 million in the various natural gas projects on Sakhalin, yet had not received "one tonne [sic] of oil or gas."<sup>202</sup>

Observers sometimes point out that the Japanese and Russian economies should complement each other. Traditionally, Japan has been poor in resources but rich in capital, while in Russia the situation is reversed. This was as true in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it is at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup>. Recently Victor Ishaev, the governor of Khabarovskii Krai in the Russian Far East, has argued that this situation makes greater economic integration within North-East Asia a logical step. In a March 2002 speech in Seoul, he attempted to show that each state in the region had different comparative advantages, and therefore the economies of China, Russia, Japan and both Koreas should move towards greater economic cooperation and integration. Japanese and South Korean capital could finance projects that utilized North Korean and Chinese manual labor, fueled by Russian energy and other natural resources, as well as scientific and engineering skill.<sup>203</sup> Ishaev is especially convincing when he argues that energy consumption within the region will not decrease in the near term, and that the Russian Far East has an abundance of oil and gas deposits. However, his assumption that Japanese or even South Koreans will invest in Russian economic development is overly optimistic, especially when one considers the expense required to locate and exploit Russian energy sources. It remains cheaper and financially less risky to import oil from the Persian Gulf and elsewhere, although instability in the Middle East might change that calculation.

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*the 1990s* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 272-281.

<sup>201</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 506.

<sup>202</sup> Glaubitz, *Between Tokyo and Moscow*, 135.

<sup>203</sup> Victor Ishaev, "Recent Trends in the World Political Situation, Globalization and Prospects for Cooperation in the Energy Sector in Northeast Asia." Speech given at the International Workshop on "Energy Security and Sustainable Development in Northeast Asia: Prospects for Cooperative Policies." Seoul, Republic of Korea, 29 March 2002 [cited 22 April 2002], available at [www.adm.kvh.ru/Invest2.nsf/2dfba8b2d0bf2470ca256524001a00c6/d0a05be2483338b0ca256b91007efb6a?OpenDoc](http://www.adm.kvh.ru/Invest2.nsf/2dfba8b2d0bf2470ca256524001a00c6/d0a05be2483338b0ca256b91007efb6a?OpenDoc); INTERNET.

Throughout the 1990's, Japan was accused of being indifferent to democratic transition in Russia by refusing to decouple economic aid from resolution of the Northern Territories dispute. Japan's attitude has cost them significant political capital among their G-8 partners.<sup>204</sup> However, many Japanese companies did invest in Russia beginning in the latter Gorbachev period and continuing through the first years after the demise of the Soviet Union, even though the Japanese government was stingy in granting economic assistance. Most of this investment came during the most chaotic period of Russia's transition between 1991 and 1995, before the Russian economy found a level of relative stability following the devaluation of the ruble in 1998 and subsequent economic growth. As a consequence, practically all of the ventures and joint-ventures lost money or failed outright.<sup>205</sup> In hindsight, the failure of the Japanese to provide official assistance appears to have demonstrated financial prudence, especially considering the significant capital flight from Russia since 1992, which continues to be estimated at around \$1.5 billion per month.<sup>206</sup> Since the mid 1990's when most of the Japanese companies in Russia pulled out after being badly burned, there has been a marked hesitancy to risk an encore. One Japanese scholar, Toshiji Maeda, director of the Khabarovsk Japan Center, attributes this economic timidity to the fact that Japanese companies remain uninformed about the present economic and political situation in Russia. In Maeda's view, there may be small and medium sized Russian businesses that are "investment worthy for Japan."<sup>207</sup> But while this may be true, other more important reasons keep Japanese capital out of Russia.

From 1992 until 2002, the Japanese were the single largest donors of Official Development Assistance (ODA) throughout the world.<sup>208</sup> But Japan in 2002 is not the Japan of 1989, before the "bubble economy" burst. After more than a decade of recession

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<sup>204</sup> Kimura and Welch, "Specifying 'Interests,'" 223-224.

<sup>205</sup> Toshiji Maeda, "The Russian Far East as a Business Partner," Economic Research Institute of Northeast Asia (ERINA), 2002. [cited April 22, 2002], available at [www.erina.or.jp/Opinion/E/Russia/eMaeda.htm](http://www.erina.or.jp/Opinion/E/Russia/eMaeda.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>206</sup> "Good in Part," *Economist*, 19 July 2001. [cited 03 August, 2002], available at [www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story\\_ID=698694](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=698694); INTERNET.

<sup>207</sup> Maeda, "The Russian Far East as a Business Partner." The Japan Center project is a semi-governmental organization funded by the Japanese government to promote better relations and understanding of Japanese culture. There are several Japan Centers located throughout Russia.

<sup>208</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA), "Fact Sheet: Japan's Development Policies," [cited 08 August, 2002], available at [www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2002/policy-f.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/2002/policy-f.html); INTERNET.

(actually, a series of four recessions), Japan's economy continues to suffer from significant structural problems. Since 1989, the Japanese government debt has risen to nearly 140 percent of GDP (as of April 2002), the Nikkei 225 stock index has fallen by 75 percent, unemployment is nearing the post-war high of 5.6 percent, corporate debt throughout Japan is estimated by Goldman Sachs to be around \$1.5 trillion (as of 2000), and interest rates currently stand at 0.001 percent.<sup>209</sup> Japan's economic malaise combined with the better investment climate and generally better infrastructures in East and South East Asia have acted to prevent any serious investment in Russia since the 1998 devaluation of the ruble. What investment capital exists has evidently been put into emerging Asian economies, where the Japanese are the single largest investors.<sup>210</sup> Among the major players in North East Asia – Japan, China, Russia, South Korea and the United States – Japanese trade with Russia remains miniscule. Trade with Russia currently amounts to approximately \$5 billion, compared to \$30 billion with the ROK, \$80 billion with the PRC, and over \$200 billion with the U.S.<sup>211</sup> Therefore, the perceived risks of investing in Russia, rather than the “Northern Territories” issue, accounts for the low levels of trade between Russia and Japan.<sup>212</sup>

The overall paucity of trade between Russia and Japan does not adequately explain the entire picture, however. While Russian trade matters little to Japanese in Tokyo, it is regionally significant for parts of Hokkaido. This is especially true in the areas around Otaru, Wakanai and Nemuro, where 20 percent of all trade with Russia occurs.<sup>213</sup> While all of Japan has generally suffered economically during the 1990's, Hokkaido with its agriculture-based economy has been hit harder than most of Japan.<sup>214</sup> In 2001, the unemployment rate in Hokkaido averaged 5.8 percent, compared to an average of 4.9 percent throughout Japan. Although Hokkaido is not as badly off as other regions such as Okinawa, which posted an average unemployment rate of 8.4 percent in

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<sup>209</sup> “What Ails Japan?” in “A Survey of Japan,” 16 pp, *The Economist*, 20-26 April 2002, 3-4.

<sup>210</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 161.

<sup>211</sup> JIIA, Interview; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Japan-Republic of Korea Relations,” [cited 05 august 2002], available at [www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea); INTERNET.

<sup>212</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, “One Asia Policy or Two? Moscow and the Russian Far East Debate Russia's Engagement in Asia,” *NBR Analysis* 13 (March 2002): 80-82.

<sup>213</sup> Akaha and Vassilieva, “The Russian Presence in Hokkaido,” 7.

<sup>214</sup> American Embassy Tokyo, Interview.



2001, the situation is still relatively bleak.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, a volume of trade that would be considered insignificant elsewhere has a major impact in the coastal regions of Hokkaido. Officials in Hokkaido have argued for greater economic integration with the Russian Far East and Sakhalin as well as increased cultural exchanges in their efforts to assist Japan's campaign for reversion of the disputed islands.<sup>216</sup> The Russians in the Far East have desired greater ties as well, seeing in Japan the source of capital for badly needed infrastructure improvements. Despite military sales to China from Primorskii Krai, Japan remains the top destination for exports from the Russian Far East, mostly in the form of fish and natural resources.<sup>217</sup>

The December 2000 visit of Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev to Tokyo marked a relatively significant improvement in relations between the two countries. This was the first-ever visit to Japan by a Russian or Soviet defense minister. It fulfilled pledges made at the 1997 Yeltsin-Hashimoto "no necktie summit" in Krasnoyarsk.<sup>218</sup> Since then there have been regular exchanges between the Russian military and the Japanese Self Defense Force. These have included mutual ship visits, search and rescue exercises and other confidence building measures and recently have included a Japanese proposal for cooperative mine-clearing operations in Afghanistan.<sup>219</sup> Security cooperation between the two militaries is, however, still in a delicate phase. While the JSDF shifted from a Soviet invasion scenario in 1989 during the annual "Yama-Sakura" exercise, as recently as February 2001, the Russian Army conducted a major exercise simulating nuclear war with the United States. The "Cold War era" scenario posited a military conflict with the United States that escalated into global nuclear war and

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<sup>215</sup> "Japan's Okinawa Prefecture Records Highest Jobless Rate in 2001," *Asia Pulse*, 1 March 2002 [cited 05 August 2002], available at Yahoo! Singapore Finance, [sg.biz.yahoo.com/020301/16/2k1na.html](http://sg.biz.yahoo.com/020301/16/2k1na.html); INTERNET.; Hokkaido has also been affected by a string of scandals involving Snow Brand Foods and other large food companies. Snow Brand was shut down by government officials for reselling old milk, running unsanitary food processing plants and repackaging foreign procured meat as Japanese in origin. Several other meat packing companies were implicated in the repackaging scandal, which came to a head while the author was in Japan during July 2002.

<sup>216</sup> Hokkaido Prefecture Government, "Measures for the Reversion of the Northern Territories," [cited 25 July 2002], available at [www.pref.hokkaido.jp/soumu/sm-hrtsk/hp-en/polic-en.htm](http://www.pref.hokkaido.jp/soumu/sm-hrtsk/hp-en/polic-en.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>217</sup> Wishnick, "One Asia Policy of Two?" 80-81.

<sup>218</sup> NIDS, Interview.

<sup>219</sup> Wishnick, "One Asia Policy or Two?", 78-79.



included strikes on bases in Japan.<sup>220</sup> Since the United States launched its “War on Terrorism” following the September 11, 2001 attacks, there are new alignments of interests between Russia and Japan. Russia’s new orientation will not necessarily result in increased cooperation with Japan on other security issues, although it would be in the interests of both states to use the situation to increase mutual trust.

### C. “FLOWERS WITHOUT ROOTS”<sup>221</sup>

Relations between Russia and Japan are necessarily measured in centimeters, not kilometers. Inter-state relations between the two powers are currently at the closest level they have been since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet the two nations are nearly as far away from signing a peace treaty in 2002 as they were in 1956. Although the territorial dispute seems like a minor issue to outside observers, it continues to have a disproportionate effect on Russo-Japanese cooperation.

One Japanese scholar compared the current relative improvement of relations to flowers that have flourished without roots. “If there is not progress in the Northern Territories dispute the flowers won’t last long.”<sup>222</sup> The problem that drives Russo-Japanese diplomacy is that neither state has placed a real priority on improving relations – political, economic or otherwise – with the other. Another analogy compares Japan and Russia to backyard neighbors, with Russia’s “house” predominantly facing Europe and Japan’s facing Asia.<sup>223</sup> The two must relate to each other, and neither desires conflict. But while there is a problem with their mutual “fence,” neither wishes to expend much effort to repair it. Despite all the friendly rhetoric, Japan and Russia expend little energy to achieve concrete results.

Russians must always deal with the definition of their state. Is Russia a European or Asian state? Is it both, or is it neither? This conflict has often been termed by Robert Wesson the “Russian Dilemma” and the struggle between the two has been evident

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<sup>220</sup> *East Asian Strategic Review 2002* (Tokyo, Japan: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2002), 255; American Embassy Tokyo, Interview.

<sup>221</sup> JIIA, Interview. The quote in entirety is, “It seems relations have flourished compared to the past, but it is like flowers that flourished without having roots. If there is not progress in the Northern Territories dispute, the flowers won’t last long.”

<sup>222</sup> JIIA, Interview.

<sup>223</sup> JIIA, Interview.

throughout modern Russian history.<sup>224</sup> Yet while Russia aspired to be a Pacific power since the time of Peter the Great, plans for development have never achieved reality. In 2002 the vast majority of Russians live west of the Ural Mountains, and Siberia and the Russian Far East remain a sparsely populated area with a rapidly declining population. Russians have a lower life expectancy than Pakistanis, and the birth rate per woman is down to 1.17, far below the 2.14 necessary to maintain a stable population, and by some estimates it could drop below 1.0.<sup>225</sup>

The main Asian concern of most Russians is not Japan, but China and the perceived threat of massive Chinese immigration into the Russian Far East. The real number of Chinese living in Russia is heavily disputed, but estimates range from 200,000 to 450,000, and projections based on recent migration trends show this number “could grow to several million by mid century.”<sup>226</sup> The shadow economy that exists between Russia and China has been of growing concern to both the Russians and Chinese, and at least some policy makers on both sides have recognized the need to bring both unofficial immigration and illicit trade under control. Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji estimated the illicit trade at approximately \$10 billion – nearly as much as legal trade between the two states.<sup>227</sup> The “strategic partnership” signed in 2001 between Russia and China is probably more an attempt by the two states to cooperate on bilateral problems ranging from trade to minor border disputes along the 4000 km long border and less an alliance aimed at the United States or Japan.<sup>228</sup> This “partnership” makes sense when seen in the context of Russia’s traditional desire to maintain relatively benign buffer states on its borders. However, *The Economist* notes the partnership “has an edge to it,” and while cooperation is increasing between the two, China is as worried about possible Russian

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<sup>224</sup> For a discussion of the “Russian Dilemma,” see Robert Wesson, *The Russian Dilemma*, revised ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986). The essence of Wesson’s argument is that Russia has been influenced by European ideas and has used European technology both to expand and play a part in the Western political order, but that at its heart, Russia remains an Asian political order.

<sup>225</sup> “Endangered Species,” *Economist*, 19 July 2001 [cited 03 August 2002], available at [www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story\\_ID=698694](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=698694); INTERNET.

<sup>226</sup> Yevgeniy Verlin, “Black Cash and Yellow Danger,” trans. FBIS, *Moscow Ekspert*, 18 March 2002, FBIS Doc. ID CEP20020404000316.

<sup>227</sup> Verlin, “Black Cash and Yellow Danger.”

<sup>228</sup> “Remaking History,” *Economist*, 19 July 2001 [cited 23 July 2002], available at [www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story\\_ID=702484](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=702484); INTERNET.

intentions as those of the United States. The Chinese remain concerned that Putin has expressed interest in a new strategic relationship with Washington and wonder about his support for regional missile defense systems.<sup>229</sup>

Also, the relations with the Korean peninsula rank above resolving the “Northern Territories” dispute with Japan on Russian list of diplomatic priorities. Russia has established itself as one of the four major players in relations between North and South Korea, the others being the United States, China and Japan. Russia still has some influence over the Kim Jong-Il regime that the Soviet Union once sponsored. Although Russia receives little to no economic benefit from its relations with the DPRK (which still owes \$3.8 billion for previous arms sales), the diplomatic influence with that hermit regime enables Russia to maintain a claim to global involvement.<sup>230</sup> South Korea is seen as an emerging economic partner, and plans exist for connection of a Trans-Korean rail line to the Trans-Siberia rail line if the DPRK and ROK follow through on their agreement on the Korean link.<sup>231</sup> At the minimum, stability on the Korean Peninsula is considered by Russian policy makers to be necessary for continued Russian participation in Asian cooperative frameworks.<sup>232</sup>

President Putin stated in his address to the Russian Federal Assembly in 2001 that Russia must “promote its participation in cooperative mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific region and expand friendship and cooperation with leading Asian countries.”<sup>233</sup> However, according to Japanese scholars, Russia often seems eager to join track-1 and track-2 Asian cooperative organizations, but then fails to dispatch appropriately high level delegates or show much interest in the organization once it becomes a member.<sup>234</sup> This proved to be the case when Russia sought entry into the Pacific Economic

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<sup>229</sup> “Remaking History,” *The Economist*; NIDS, Interview; *East Asian Strategic Review* 2002, 188.

<sup>230</sup> *East Asia Strategic Review* 2002, 248-249.

<sup>231</sup> “On Russian President Vladimir Putin's Message to President Kim Dae-jung of the Republic of Korea,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 29 July 2002 [cited 07 August 2002], available at [www.in.mid.ru/BI.nsf/900b2c3ac91734634325698f002d9dcf/431ce664cabfcacd43256c0600373600?OpenDocument](http://www.in.mid.ru/BI.nsf/900b2c3ac91734634325698f002d9dcf/431ce664cabfcacd43256c0600373600?OpenDocument); INTERNET.

<sup>232</sup> *East Asia Strategic Review* 2002, 247.

<sup>233</sup> *East Asia Strategic Review* 2002, 240.

<sup>234</sup> JIIA, Interview.

Cooperation Council, a track-2 organization whose secretariat functions are performed by JIIA. Russia lobbied hard to get into the organization ostensibly to further regional economic integration with the Russian Far East. But since it has joined, Moscow has barely participated.<sup>235</sup> While this is only one organization, and cannot be assumed to be representative of all Russian multilateral engagements in the Pacific, it does fit within a general pattern of Russian lack of interest in organizations they do not control.

Although its policies are still partially prisoner to memories of the Second World War, Japan does not have an identity crisis on the scale of that of Russia. Since the days of post-World War II reconstruction, Japan has defined its interests primarily in economic terms, leaving its security to be guaranteed by its alliance with the United States. Relations with Washington are the highest priority among Japanese policy makers, as the United States is both guarantor of Japan's security and its largest trading partner, absorbing over 30 percent of Japanese exports.<sup>236</sup> After solid U.S.-Japan relations, the Japanese generally desire stability within Asia. North Korea is seen as the only real threat to Japanese security, a fact the North Koreans seem determined to not let the Japanese forget.<sup>237</sup> China is the rising economic competitor that could overtake Japan's place as the largest economy (by GDP) in Asia if China maintains its current growth rates and Japan remains mired in its economic slump. Japan has been the largest single investor in Asia since 1993, and has made efforts to take a leadership role in regional multilateral organizations.<sup>238</sup>

Relations with Russia do not readily fit within the overall scheme of Japanese foreign policy. The territorial dispute remains the core impediment to better relations, which is an indication of the low level of importance placed on Russo-Japanese relations by the Japanese political leadership. In the estimation of both American officials in Japan

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<sup>235</sup> JIIA, Interview.

<sup>236</sup> The Economist, *Pocket World in Figures: 2001 Edition* (London, England: Profile Books Ltd., 2001), 159.

<sup>237</sup> In 1998 the DPRK launched a Taepodong III ballistic missile over Japan. In December 2001 a suspected DPRK boat fired rockets and small arms at Japanese Coast Guard cutters, which subsequently sank the "mystery ship." Efforts to recover the boat from waters in the Chinese EEZ were ongoing as of August 2002. The ship is presumed to be from the DPRK based on a uniform patch and food packages recovered from the scene in June 2002.

<sup>238</sup> Nimmo, *Japan and Russia*, 161.

and Japanese scholars, policy towards Russia has been left to the bureaucrats in the MOFA to determine.<sup>239</sup> The net effect is that Japan's Russia policy is rudderless. Part of the problem is that there is still no consensus on Russia's role within North East Asia in the post-Cold War era. The collapse of the Soviet Union had a profound effect on the security structure of North East Asia, as simultaneously a main backer of Pyongyang disappeared, the Sino-Soviet split ceased to exist, and the Soviet threat of invasion (for Japan) dissolved almost overnight. Regional security had been based on patron-client relationships within the area, with Japan and South Korea sharing a quasi alliance based on their common ally the United States.<sup>240</sup> There has not been a credible attempt to redefine the security environment within Asia since 1992, as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) or an enlarged NATO and Partnership for Peace program have attempted to accomplish in Europe. The Asian Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) has occasionally served the purpose of encouraging general dialogue, but there is still no regional framework for cooperation.

During the Cold War, Soviet-Japanese relations were essentially a function of Soviet-U.S. relations. During that time the Northern Territories dispute served a purpose of bringing the United States and Japan into closer alignment. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Japan and Russia have only managed to agree to base their talks on the 1956 Joint Declaration that reestablished diplomatic relations between Moscow and Tokyo. Since 1992, there have been five summit meetings between Russian and Japanese political leaders. At the first, between Yeltsin and then-Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa in October 1993, the Tokyo Declaration was issued stating the dispute should be resolved on the "basis of law and justice."<sup>241</sup> It took another four years before a second summit meeting could be arranged, this time between Ryūtarō Hashimoto and Yeltsin at Krasnoyarsk in central Siberia. That summit, known also as the "no-necktie summit" because of the informal and relaxed relationship between Hashimoto and Yeltsin, resulted

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<sup>239</sup> American Embassy Tokyo, Interview; Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace*, 543.

<sup>240</sup> Victor Cha defines a quasi alliance as "the relationship between two states that remain unallied despite sharing a common ally." The two states may "share a common threat and common great-power protector but are affected by alliance hindrances (historical animosity)." For more on the Japan-ROK quasi alliance, see Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>241</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 484-485.

in a pledge that the two states would attempt to conclude a peace treaty by December 2000.<sup>242</sup> The Krasnoyarsk summit was partly the result of the new Japanese “multilayered approach” announced in January 1997 in which Hashimoto sought to reduce the influence of the Northern Territories on Japan’s Russian policy. The summit marked the initiation of a “three principles approach” to peace based on “trust, mutual interests and a long-term prospective.”<sup>243</sup> Cordial meetings followed in 1998 first in Kawana, Japan and then in Moscow when a new Prime Minister, Keizo Obuchi, became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit Moscow in 25 years. Progress was made in fisheries and expansion of the visa-free travel, but little was done effectively to address the territorial issue.<sup>244</sup> Relations then came to a virtual standstill as Putin replaced Yeltsin as interim president on the eve of 2000. When Putin came to Tokyo in September 2000, it was clear that no peace treaty would be signed by the Hashimoto-Yeltsin “deadline.” Relations had not soured, but they were no longer progressing on the issue of a peace treaty. At the Irkutsk summit in March 2001, Putin reaffirmed the 1956 Joint Declaration, but as no more than an “in-depth exchange of views regarding peace treaty issues” could be decided upon.<sup>245</sup> The weakness of lame-duck Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori was no doubt partially responsible, as before attending the summit he announced he would resign as Prime Minister.

The stalemate continued as the Japanese attempted to clarify their position in July 2002, rejecting the “two-track” approach that had promoted in parallel to the official “multilayered approach” by the aforementioned MP Muneo Suzuki as well as some in the MOFA.<sup>246</sup> By that plan, Shikotan and the Habomais would be returned in the near-term after which a peace treaty could be signed, with the understanding negotiations would continue regarding Kunashiri and Etorofu. However, the new “clarified” position only

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<sup>242</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 511; Wishnick, “One Asia Policy or Two?” 75.

<sup>243</sup> Hasegawa, *Neither War Nor Peace*, 503; Tsuneo Akaha and Anna Vassilieva, “Japan and Russia Have a Date,” *International Herald Tribune*, 23 March 2001.

<sup>244</sup> Wishnick, “One Asia Policy or Two?” 75.

<sup>245</sup> “Irkutsk Statement by the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the Russian Federation on the Continuation of Future Negotiations on the Issue of a Peace Treaty,” 25 March 2001 [cited 01 May 2002], available at [www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/pmv0103/state.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/pmv0103/state.html); INTERNET.

<sup>246</sup> “Ministry Secretly Eyed 2-Track Talks,” *Asahi Shimbun*, 20 May 2002 [cited 20 May 2002], available at [www.asahi.com/english/politics/K2002052000460.html](http://www.asahi.com/english/politics/K2002052000460.html); INTERNET.

returns to the traditional line that the territorial dispute must be resolved before a peace treaty may be signed without offering any new propositions to resolve the dispute.<sup>247</sup> Despite the continued stalemate on territorial issues, Japan is continuing the Hashimoto “multi-layered approach” and is encouraging engagement with Russia in economic, environmental and cultural fields.<sup>248</sup> The “multi-layered approach” has served to lessen mutual distrust among policy-makers while enabling the recent cooperation mentioned earlier in the chapter, though continued lack of progress makes it unlikely Putin and current Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will hold another summit until early 2003.

The Northern Territories dispute provides an interesting paradox in the realm of international relations. While several Japanese scholars and American officials believe that the dispute has little practical effect on Russo-Japanese relations, it is also seen as the great limiting factor in diplomatic progress.<sup>249</sup> From the Japanese side, despite the fact that no formal connection is acknowledged, there is a general recognition that relations in non-political areas are still partially linked to resolution of the dispute. There may be another reason for this attitude: Japan may have already reached the furthest extent of cooperation with Russia that it desires. Russia for many years has looked to Japan for help in developing its Far Eastern infrastructure and industry. But it is unrealistic to expect Japanese industries or the Japanese government would commit large amounts of capital to Russian economic development even if a peace treaty were signed unless investment was made part of the negotiation process. While some deputies in the Russian Duma have proposed selling the islands to Japan for as much as \$2.5 trillion – a sum 6 and a half times greater than Russia’s GDP – the official position of both governments remains intractable, which leaves little room for compromise.<sup>250</sup> Japan refuses to consider any alternative short of a return of Japanese sovereignty over all four islands,

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<sup>247</sup> “Japan Tries to Fix Dents in its Russia Policy,” *Asahi Shimbun*, 31 July 2002 [cited 01 August 2002], available at [www.asahi.com/english/politics/K2002073100300.html](http://www.asahi.com/english/politics/K2002073100300.html); INTERNET.

<sup>248</sup> JIIA, Interview.

<sup>249</sup> JIIA, Interview; American Embassy Tokyo, Interview; NIDS, Interview.

<sup>250</sup> Oleg Artyukov, “Russia Will Not Give Away Kuril Islands to Japan, But Will It Sell?” trans. Maria Gousseva, *Pravda*, 19 March 2002 [cited 01 May 2002], available at [English.pravda.ru/world/2002/03/19/27067.html](http://English.pravda.ru/world/2002/03/19/27067.html); INTERNET. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy has suggested he might be willing to let the islands go for the price of \$1 trillion. Although the \$2.5 trillion figure was proposed by the head of the Duma Committee for International Affairs, it is probably not a serious offer and is not the official policy of the Russian Government.

while Russia continually insists the Japanese abandon “extreme demands,” a catch-phrase referring to the Japanese request for the return of all the islands.<sup>251</sup>

One major reason the territorial dispute will continue for the foreseeable future is that continued stalemate offers the safer political course to both sides than does any conceivable compromise. As discussed in chapter IV, domestic politics in both countries is a major determinant of policy concerning the disputed islands. Without compromising their respective positions, the Russians and Japanese have found ways to cooperate that skirt the sovereignty issues, yet accomplish basic the goals of each country. Through the visa-free exchange visits inaugurated in 1992, many former Japanese residents have been able to return to the islands to pay their respects to the dead. According to Hokkaido Prefecture Government statistics, 3,543 Japanese visited the islands from 1992 to September 2001.<sup>252</sup> For Russia, there has been some economic investment by the Japanese in the Russian Far East as well as some small joint development projects on the islands themselves beyond just humanitarian aid. However, as the Allison study notes, “Because the matter is essentially symbolic, there are few advocates of an immediate resolution that would entail any compromise, while many support a stand on principle, whatever the consequences ... There is no political cost for a stand on principle that demands four islands and gets nothing.”<sup>253</sup>

#### **D. IF THE FLOWERS HAD ROOTS**

While there is considerable cooperation now between Japan and Russia on many fronts, especially considering the glacial rate of progress that had been typical throughout the Cold War, there is still much that Japan and Russia have to gain from full normalization of relations. Masato Kimura and David Welch in particular highlight how the “ultimate victim” of the islands dispute has been Japanese foreign policy and world

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<sup>251</sup> “Japan Tries to Fix Dents,” *Ashahi Shimbun*; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “Russo-Japanese Consultations Held, ” unofficial translation of press release, 24 July 2002 [cited 01 August 2002], available at [www.ln.mid.ru/BI.nsf/900b2c3ac91734634325698f002d9dcf/39f97904c04e722d43256c010046df5f?OpenDocument](http://www.ln.mid.ru/BI.nsf/900b2c3ac91734634325698f002d9dcf/39f97904c04e722d43256c010046df5f?OpenDocument); INTERNET.

<sup>252</sup> Hokkaido Prefecture Government, “Measures for Reversion of the Northern Territories,” [cited 25 June 2002], available at [www.pref.hokkaido.jp/soumu/sm-hrtsk/hp-en/toriku-en.htm](http://www.pref.hokkaido.jp/soumu/sm-hrtsk/hp-en/toriku-en.htm); INTERNET.

<sup>253</sup> Graham Allison, Hiroshi Kimura and Konstantin Sarkisov. *Beyond Cold War to Trilateral Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Scenarios for New Relationships between Japan, Russia and the United States*, Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project (Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1992), 39.



standing, and that “Japan is not [rationally] maximizing anything in seeking their return.”<sup>254</sup> However, the Russians have gained nothing themselves through their intransigence on the issue and their failure to seriously examine one of the lasting legacies of Stalin’s foreign and domestic policy for the Soviet Union. Russia is in a position for the foreseeable future where it needs the Japanese more than the Japanese need Russia. Japan is slowly – albeit painfully – transitioning from an industrial export-based economy to a service based economy. Though many Japanese worry about the migration of their factories to South East Asia and China, these movements “merely reflect the fact that Japan is a mature economy that should be turning to service products.”<sup>255</sup>

With the possible exception of energy resources, Japan no longer needs what Russia’s has most to offer: natural resources. However, if Russia expects regional assistance in developing the Far East, Japan is the only state that could help. South Korea must strengthen itself and save for the day when it must finance the reconstruction of the North in a united Korea. The Koreans have no doubt watched the example of Germany and the pain reunification caused the strongest economy in Europe. Neither can Russia expect help from China. China is itself practically two separate countries consisting of the developed coast and the undeveloped interior. Although the Chinese economy is growing rapidly, prosperity has not reached the interior. Even some of its “modern cities” are mere edifices – Qingdao, for example, looks like a modern city with an impressive skyline from offshore until one gets into the city and notices that many of the grandiose buildings are only half complete, unoccupied and construction has apparently ceased.<sup>256</sup> It is unlikely China will be willing to contribute to construction in Russia when there is much to do within China itself. Excusing China and South Korea leaves Japan as the only possible or likely source of capital for long-term infrastructure and economic development in the Far East.

The greatest benefit resolution of the “Northern Territories” dispute will bring is the full normalization of relations between the Russian Federation and Japan. The dispute

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<sup>254</sup> Kimura and Welch, “Specifying ‘Interests,’” 226, 232.

<sup>255</sup> “East, West, Home’s Best” in “A Survey of Japan,” 16 pp, *The Economist*, 20-26 April 2002, 14.

<sup>256</sup> Description based on author’s observations in July 2000.

is the last remaining issue left from the Second World War. Although it does not seem to matter much in the context of everyday relations between Japan and Russia, it has a poisoning effect on mutual perceptions. The rhetoric recalls historical injustices stretching back to the time before Japan was a modern state and Russia was still ruled by the tsars. Closure of this episode would release Russo-Japanese relations from the stranglehold that has been placed upon them. All the Japanese scholars interviewed by the author have concluded that the “lack of a treaty creates a limit” in how much the Japanese are willing to cooperate with Russia, even if they disagree about whether that limit has been reached.<sup>257</sup>

For Russia, the greatest prospective benefit is the possibility of greatly expanded economic assistance. Japan’s “multilayered approach” has already resulted in “more than \$6 billion in credits and investment” and reduced Japanese government interference in private investment.<sup>258</sup> If the mental limit is removed, however, the amount of aid can be expected to increase as the Japanese would take more seriously the integration of the Russian Far East into the North East Asian economy. The model most appealing to Russia would be Sino-Japanese relations in the period following normalization of relations between Japan and the PRC in 1972. In the 15 years following normalization, trade increased from \$1.1 billion to \$15.6 billion by 1987, and has since skyrocketed to \$80 billion. In the same period, China became the “single biggest recipient of Japanese aid.”<sup>259</sup> Although aid to Russia for many reasons would not reach this amount, Japan has been generous in the past with aid to countries with which it had been at war. The PRC, Taiwan and the ROK have all been recipients of Japanese aid following normalization of relations, although this record may lead the Russians to expect far more than the Japanese are willing to provide, and it must be noted these nations also received the brunt of Japanese aggression between 1905 and 1945. Additionally, increased economic aid may only come if the dispute is resolved in Japan’s favor and most or all of the islands are returned to Japanese sovereignty. However, it must be noted that much of the development aid Japan has already provided has either been unutilized or mismanaged.

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<sup>257</sup> JIIA, Interview; NIDS, Interview.

<sup>258</sup> Wishnick, “One Asia Policy or Two?” 77.

<sup>259</sup> Reinhard Drifte, *Japan’s Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1990), 98-99.; JIIA, Interview.

One report indicates that of the 4.38 billion yen (\$37.1 million) allotted in Fiscal Year 1999, “only about 550 million yen has actually been spent.”<sup>260</sup>

Japan will also gain from resolution of its dispute with Russia. Perhaps the greatest possible benefit could be Russian support for Japan’s desire to become the sixth permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, although that would also probably require repealing Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, another politically difficult task.<sup>261</sup> Additionally, it would lessen the impact of the Sino-Russian “strategic partnership” on Japanese security by removing the primary source of conflict between Russia and Japan. Japan and Russia have many common interests within North East Asia, not the least of which is stability on the Korean Peninsula. As long as the territorial dispute exists, cooperation in security issues cannot fully progress and no long-term security regime can be developed in the region.

Unfortunately, the prognosis for resolution of the territorial dispute is slim given the current internal domestic political situations in both Russia and Japan. President Putin himself pointed to the heart of the dispute when he said in a press conference, “The most important thing is the status of the people who believe that this territory is their homeland, those who consider it to be their homeland after the Second World War, and those who considered it to be their homeland before the Second World War.”<sup>262</sup> Two separate groups of people consider the islands to be their rightful home, a situation not unlike the one at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both groups have support of the majority of their respective populations, though the symbolism surrounding the

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<sup>260</sup> “Russian Aid Group Fails to Spend Funds Provided by Japan,” *Asahi Shimbun*, 30 July 2002, FBIS Doc ID JPP20020730000055.

<sup>261</sup> “East, West, Home’s Best,” 13; Article 9 was written by Gen. Douglas MacArthur to prevent Japan from ever using military force abroad. The article reads in part, “the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. ... The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”[qtd. in Appendix IV of Hugh Borton, *Japan’s Modern Century* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), 493]. Current interpretation holds this article prevents Japan from engaging its right to collective self-defense. The article still maintains widespread domestic popularity, though new interpretations have allowed Japan to engage in peacekeeping and non-conflict operations. Some critics allege Japan should not be allowed to join the Permanent Security Council as long as they are unwilling to fully commit their forces in support of U.N. mandated operations that may involve armed conflict, such as the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War against Iraq. Although the Japanese have interpreted their constitution to allow for some peacekeeping roles, there are strict prohibitions on the use of Japanese forces in any role that could potentially involve armed conflict.

<sup>262</sup> “Russia: President Putin Gives News Conference for Domestic, Foreign Press,” trans. FBIS, transcript of live Russian TV *RTR* press conference, 18 July 2001, FBIS Doc. ID CEP20010718000297.

dispute overpowers thoughts of the actual people involved. Unless a drastic change in either the internal or external environment occurs, the benefits of resolution are not yet great enough for politicians in Russia or Japan to make the necessary compromises that could lead to a peace treaty and final settlement.

## **VI. WHAT CONDITIONS MIGHT SHIFT THE PARADIGM?**

Japan and Russia have reached a diplomatic impasse over the Northern Territories, essentially because this has become a hot domestic issue in both countries, neither of which possesses the statesman-like leadership to resolve. Given current conditions, external and internal, continued stalemate is the most likely outcome for the foreseeable future. Domestic concerns have made governments in Japan and Russia wary of being seen to give in on the issue, lest they lose face and be forced from office. In both Japan and Russia, legislative approval is required for the ratification of any treaty. Given the multi-party nature of each assembly and the fragility of government coalitions, neither the Russian nor the Japanese government is willing to risk making itself vulnerable on an issue of such seemingly marginal importance. For a peace treaty to be signed that will settle the ownership of the Northern Territories, a significant change must occur in the nature of Russo-Japanese relations. This does not mean a slight change in strategy, as was the “multilateral approach” forwarded by then-Prime Minister Hashimoto in 1997, or the acceptance of the 1956 accord by President Putin in 2001. Rather, the resolution of the Northern Territories dispute will require a fundamental alteration in Russo-Japanese relations.

At the heart of the problem is the symbolism surrounding the territorial dispute. Each nation views the Northern Territories issue in an overly emotional context. This will continue until the imagery of World War II softens, until possession of the islands is established on rational geographic, strategic and economic criteria, and no longer equated with the idea of victory or humiliation in war. This may not occur until the death of the World War II generation and the gradual fading of historical memory allows the issue to be approached in a relatively rational manner, shorn of the emotional baggage of living memory. A return to economic prosperity in both Hokkaido and the Russian Far East would also help this process along. People who have their economic needs met are less likely to be swayed by those who have nothing to offer but nationalistic rhetoric. However, both of these factors will take time – possibly generations – because historical memories do not quickly fade and economic prosperity is unlikely to return quickly to

these remote and depressed regions. For the Northern Territories dispute to be approached by both parties in a more detached manner, there must first be a change in the value placed on bilateral relations by the popular opinion in each country. Authors Graham Allison, Hiroshi Kimura and Konstantin Sarkisov concluded in a study published over a decade ago: “The need for an intermediary to break the impasse and help both nations see the larger interests in this issue is apparent. ... If there is to be a resolution in the near future, a third party will have to play a major role in transforming the dispute into a positive sum game in which the parties can find a mutually-acceptable compromise that serves the larger interests of all.”<sup>263</sup>

The first segment of this chapter will outline possible scenarios that may convince the Russians and Japanese that their interests are best served through normalization and possible alliance, as opposed to prolonging the past legacy of disagreement and antagonism. At the end of the chapter, the implications for regional security will be assessed in terms of opposed scenarios of resolution or non-resolution of the Northern Territories dispute.

#### **A. EXTERNAL STIMULI**

Although they are neighbors, Russo-Japanese relations have often been propelled by influences of third party intervention in the region. For instance, Russian intervention in the Pacific in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulted in great part from competition with Britain and the United States. The Meiji Restoration in Japan was sparked by the realization that Japan had to modernize or it would share the fate of Ch’ing Dynasty China, bullied and ultimately dismembered by outside powers. Indeed, it was the competition sparked by the implosion of China in the nineteenth and twentieth century China, a break-up hastened by European intervention, that created the conditions for the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. The Treaty of Portsmouth that ended this war was negotiated between the two belligerents by President Theodore Roosevelt. Stalin entered the Pacific War at the insistent urging of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who wanted an ally to aid in the invasion of Japan. But Stalin, too, sought to avenge the Russian

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<sup>263</sup> Graham Allison, Hiroshi Kimura and Konstantin Sarkisov, *Beyond Cold War to Trilateral Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Scenarios for New Relationships between Japan, Russia and the United States*, Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project (Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1992), 28.

humiliation of 1904-1905, recoup Russian primacy in Korea and Sakhalin, and establish a sphere of influence in Manchuria. Following the war, both the Soviets and the United States formulated their relations with Tokyo in a Cold War context.

Given the history of third party influence on the Northern Territories issue, the assumption of this chapter is that the international environment must change to create conditions to move a resolution forward. The first, and most likely, evolution is that the emergence of China as a potential regional hegemon. This may drive Russia and Japan closer together, and cause them to put this rather minor dispute behind them in the interests of greater cooperation against a potential strategic and economic threat.

### **1. Hostile China**

After a “Century of Humiliation,” Chinese power may finally achieve the economic and political potential that many have predicted for it at least since Franklin D. Roosevelt pushed for Chinese membership on the Permanent Security Council in 1945. Between 1990 and 1998, average economic growth in China has been estimated at 11.2 percent, and in the past year it has managed a respectable 8 percent growth.<sup>264</sup> As a consequence, all governments are trying to adjust to the emergence of a rising Chinese regional, perhaps even global power. As mentioned earlier, Russia has chosen to enter a “strategic partnership” with China in the 2001 China-Russian “Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation.” Something less than a full strategic alliance, the new partnership can be viewed as a bid to “stem support for a unipolar world with the United States as the only superpower.”<sup>265</sup> The partnership is necessary for the Chinese military in its modernization efforts, as most of the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) equipment is based on old Soviet armaments. Two articles in the treaty strengthen ties between Russia and China through cooperation in “military technology, scientific technology, energy, nuclear power, aerospace technology” which the PLA requires to allow its forces to at least be competitive with those of the United States in some selected sectors.<sup>266</sup> Following the demise of the Soviet Union, many in the United States have

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<sup>264</sup> The Economist, *Pocket World in Figures: 2001 Edition* (London, England: Profile Books Ltd., 2001), 120.; “Emerging Market Indicators,” *Economist*, 31 August – 6 September, 2002, 78.

<sup>265</sup> *East Asian Strategic Review 2002* (Tokyo, Japan: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2002), 185.

<sup>266</sup> *East Asian Strategic Review 2002*, 185.

come to view China as an emerging military threat, or at the very least, as President George W. Bush labeled it, a “strategic competitor.”

Chinese military funding for modernization has increased dramatically in the past several years, and while the technological level of their most modern forces is still significantly behind the United States, closer cooperation with Russia and increased arms purchases may quickly reduce that gap. China sees itself as the natural hegemon in Asia based on its historical primacy and cultural influence throughout the long duration of its existence. However, a gradual increase in Chinese power is unlikely to alarm the Russians, though it may worry the Japanese. Despite China’s modernization plan for the PLA, the current focus remains on economic development. While China may eventually develop into the strongest regional power overall, current leaders are unlikely to do anything that would seriously affect their economy.

Yet China, for all its economic growth is not necessarily a stable state. Many of the assumptions regarding China’s rising power seem to be based on straight-line projections: that China will maintain high levels of economic growth indefinitely, that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will maintain its hold on political power, and that China will not face any significant internal upheavals. However, there are significant dangers inherent in straight-line projection. China’s governmental and decision-making structures are not transparent and rule by the CCP has not produced a regulated method of transferring power from one set of rulers to another. The current tremors regarding whether Jiang Zemin would gracefully step aside and the confusion over when the 16<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress would be held show this defect in orderly power transfer.<sup>267</sup> Minxin Pei, a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, writing about the decline of the Chinese Communist Party has referred to contemporary China as a cross between the “political stagnation” in the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev with the “crony capitalism” in Indonesia under Suharto, noting that “pervasive corruption, a collusive local officialdom, elite cynicism, and mass disenchantment ... are the classic symptoms of degenerating governing capacity.”<sup>268</sup> The real danger from China is not a steady rise in regional power, but political fragmentation and internal

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<sup>267</sup> “China’s Leadership Quarrel,” *Economist*, 31 August – 6 September 2002, 29-30.

<sup>268</sup> Minxin Pei, “China’s Governance Crisis,” *Foreign Affairs* 81, (September-October 2002): 99.



collapse leading to the emergence of a hostile regime. This scenario would seriously concern both Russia and Japan.

The CCP has lost its credibility among many in China because of official corruption, and the Party itself has lost much of its ability to mobilize the population.<sup>269</sup> Minxin Pei notes, “Increasingly, when faced with direct challenges to its authority, the CCP can rely only on repression rather than public mobilization to counter its opponents.”<sup>270</sup> If Chinese leaders attempt serious political reform to redress the contradictions within their system, there is no guarantee of success. There can be no doubt that Chinese leaders are ever mindful of the fact that no Leninist-style party has survived attempts at political reform.

If the CCP were to collapse amidst social tensions, there is no guarantee of what system might arise. Establishment of democracy in China cannot be a forgone conclusion. Rather, considering how the CCP has managed effectively to limit the formation of any large-scale or coordinated opposition, democracy is probably not a likely outcome. In a worst-case scenario, if the PLA took power and chose to pursue a confrontational path against its neighbors, Russia could only look to Japan and the United States to secure its interests. If Russia felt the Chinese military required balancing, and the Japanese felt threatened by increased Chinese militarism, a hostile China could provide a necessary stimulus for Russian and Japanese leaders to solve their territorial dispute in the interests of national security. John J. Mearsheimer, a professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, has suggested that Japan “would not dare challenge” a militarily powerful China.<sup>271</sup> This line of reasoning, however, ignores the larger dynamic of Chinese-Japanese relations over several centuries that has shown Japan more than willing to resist Chinese domination. While it may be true Japan could not overpower Chinese military might in a land battle on the Asian continent, the Japanese do possess the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest military in the Asian-Pacific area.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> *East Asian Strategic Review 2002*, 174-175.

<sup>270</sup> Minxin Pei, “China’s Governance Crisis,” 101.

<sup>271</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “The Future of the American Pacifier,” *Foreign Affairs* 80 (September-October 2001): 57.

<sup>272</sup> Mearsheimer suggests a scenario of Japan invading China, though this is completely unrealistic considering Japanese experience in World War II. Additionally, he fails to say why Japan would ever see a

In this scenario, Japan and Russia would be forced towards closer cooperation in coordination with the United States to “contain” China. Russians are keenly aware of increased Chinese migration into Siberia, and many see it as a threat to Russian security.<sup>273</sup> Likewise, the Japanese have had territorial disputes of their own with the Chinese, and China could affect the Sea Lines Of Communication (SLOC) upon which Japan depends for trade and oil. The Northern Territories would thus cease to be a marginal issue, because Russo-Japanese relations would be a higher priority in both countries than each state’s bilateral relations with China. Additionally, it would be in U.S. interests to push for resolution to bring Russia and Japan closer together because no security regime that sought to contain China would be successful without Japanese and Russian participation. U.S. negotiators or intermediaries could then play a secondary role of deflecting or preventing a domestic backlash against either Russian or Japanese leaders by making arguments that resolution was required by all in the interest of national interests and security.

## **2. Disruption of Oil**

A second scenario that may induce closer Russo-Japanese cooperation could be a prolonged conflict in the Persian Gulf. The Japanese currently receive approximately 80 percent of their oil from Persian Gulf states, with most of the rest coming from Indonesia and none coming from Russia.<sup>274</sup> As anti-Saddam rhetoric heats up in Washington and U.S. troops continue operations against the remnants of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the Japanese have been keen to maintain cordial relations with the oil-exporting Gulf States, especially Iran.<sup>275</sup> Additionally, like the United States, the Japanese maintain a strategic oil reserve currently totaling 315 million barrels to ensure that energy supplies are not disrupted by a short-term conflict or embargo.<sup>276</sup> However, if the region was to become

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need to invade China. Mearsheimer, “The Future of the American Pacifier,” 54.

<sup>273</sup> Yevgeniy Verlin, “Black Cash and Yellow Danger,” trans. FBIS, *Moscow Ekspert*, 18 March 2002, FBIS Doc. ID CEP20020404000316.

<sup>274</sup> Energy Information Administration (EIA), “Japan Country Analysis Brief,” United States Department of Energy (11 April 2002) [cited 2 September 2002], available at [www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/japan.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/japan.html); INTERNET.

<sup>275</sup> Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, “Japan’s Dual Hedge,” *Foreign Affairs* 81 (September-October 2002): 115.

<sup>276</sup> Inja Paik, Paul Leiby, Donald Jones, Keiichi Yokobori and David Bowman, “Strategic Oil Stocks in the APEC Region,” (paper dated 06 April 1999, presented of the International Association of Energy

seriously destabilized and production or delivery substantially disrupted for an extended period of time, Japan would need to find other sources of oil. Russia is perhaps the only country that could offset a drop or halt in Saudi production. Russia's 48.6 billion barrels in reserves are not nearly as great as the 264.2 billion barrels in reserves – more than 25 percent of the world's total – that the Saudis control. But they do represent approximately 5 per cent of the world's known reserves.<sup>277</sup> During Soviet times, Russia exported approximately 12 million barrels of oil a day and was the world's leading oil exporter.<sup>278</sup> Russia now produces approximately 5 million barrels per day and its oil companies are pouring investment back into infrastructure and exploration as well as engaging in more partnerships with foreign oil companies.<sup>279</sup> Sakhalin, for example, is estimated to have reserves of approximately 3.3 billion barrels of oil within fields currently under development, and developers hope to provide a significant percentage of Japan's oil requirements.<sup>280</sup>

Japan has reduced its oil consumption since 2000, partially through greater efficiency and partially because of the latest economic recession and corresponding drop in industrial demand. Japanese consumption of 5.4 million barrels per day is expected to remain steady or fall slightly, and the Japanese have been attempting to diversify their oil imports to rely less on the Middle East, although so far they have had little success in doing so.<sup>281</sup> The Japanese have begun financing oil exploration and extraction in the Caspian Sea through arrangements with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, but they have so far remained cool to the prospect of oil deliveries from Russia.<sup>282</sup> The reason for this may be

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Economists Annual International Conference, Rome, Italy, June 1999), 3.

<sup>277</sup> Energy Information Administration (EIA), "Russia Country Analysis Brief," United States Department of Energy (25 April 2002) [cited 01 September 2002], available at [www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/russia.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/russia.html); INTERNET; Energy Information Administration (EIA), "Saudi Arabia Country Analysis Brief," United States Department of Energy (25 January 2002) [cited 01 September 2002], available at [www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/saudi.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/saudi.html); INTERNET.

<sup>278</sup> EIA, "Russia Country Analysis Brief."

<sup>279</sup> Energy Information Administration (EIA), "Russia Oil and Natural Gas Exports," United States Department of Energy (April 2002) [cited 01 September 2002], available at [www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/rusexp.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/rusexp.html); INTERNET.

<sup>280</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, "For Big Oil, Open Door in Far East of Russia," *New York Times*, 6 August 2002.

<sup>281</sup> EIA, "Japan Country Analysis Brief."

<sup>282</sup> EIA, "Japan Country Brief."

the failure of early Japanese investment in Russia during the first years of the Yeltsin administration coupled with the low return on investment and long duration of the joint development projects in Sakhalin.

Despite current Japanese reservations of dealing with Russia, if the Japanese oil supply were seriously disrupted or deemed unreliable, only Russia has the excess production capacity that could meet current Japanese demands. Such a situation is not unthinkable. If the United States attacks Iraq and the Iraqis respond with attacks on oil production facilities on the Arabian Peninsula, as they did with the Kuwaiti oil fields in 1991, then Japan would be forced to turn to Russia. Russia could then use oil as leverage to secure a favorable resolution of the Northern Territories dispute and sign a peace treaty that required them to return only Shikotan and the Habomais.

### **3. Russia in NATO**

The third scenario that could sufficiently change the paradigm upon which Russo-Japanese relations are based is Russian accession into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary entered NATO in the first round of post-Cold War expansion. The event was unthinkable only a decade before, when the impending collapse of the Soviet Union was not considered a serious possibility by experts. Many Soviet specialists were caught by surprise and, in one unlucky act of timing, Alvin Rubenstein of the University of Pennsylvania saw his book on active Soviet foreign policy go into print after the Soviet Union ceased to exist. The final section of Rubenstein's the book is entitled: "The Future of Soviet-American Relations and Soviet Strategy Beyond the Year 2000."<sup>283</sup> The point of this illustration is to demonstrate that Russia's relations with NATO have often defied even expert prediction.

U.S. opponents of NATO expansion have frequently invoked potential effects from enlargement on Russia, fearing instability within Russia itself or instability caused by Russia in countries on its border.<sup>284</sup> Yet before new members had even joined, the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed in 1997. This gave the Russians a presence in

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<sup>283</sup> Alvin Rubinstein, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II: Imperial and Global*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harpers Collins Publishers, 1992), 305.

<sup>284</sup> David Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 105-108.

NATO through the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC). In May 2002, Russia was integrated further into NATO's structures through the creation of the NATO-Russia Council, which replaced the PJC. Russia's role increased, as a press release noted: "In the framework of the NATO-Russia Council, NATO member states and Russia will work as equal partners in areas of common interest."<sup>285</sup> Russia, therefore, has gained a place as a *de facto* member in NATO. However, the point here is not to examine the arguments against full Russian integration into all of NATO's political and military structures, but to ponder the changes that Russian membership and the accession process might bring to the North East Asian security situation and its impact on Russo-Japanese relations in the event the United States seriously pushed for full membership of Russia in NATO.

NATO already has one member whose interests span the globe: the United States. Were Russia to join NATO, the alliance would wrap around the entire northern hemisphere and could significantly change the entire security situation in North East Asia. Most prominently, Russia and Japan would enter into a quasi-alliance similar to that between Korea and Japan because both Russia and Japan would be bound by a bilateral security relationship with the United States. If Russia could simultaneously maintain some form of its "strategic partnership" with China so that the Chinese did not feel that a greatly expanded NATO alliance including Russia was directed against them, security in North East Asia could stabilize. Japan and Russia working in conjunction could possibly improve the environmental security situation through greater coordination in the protection of marine resources. However, such an alliance could also have a temporarily destabilizing effect if China viewed the new relationship as being a form of containment. In that case, the first scenario could come arise through a self-fulfilling prophesy: China being treated as a threat by the United States, Russia and Japan could easily become a threat.

Some Japanese scholars support the entry of Russia into NATO, and even argue that Japan should do what it can to promote Russian entry. In at least one way, Japanese interests could be well served: the *NATO Handbook* outlines among the requirements for

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<sup>285</sup> "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality: Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation," NATO (28 May 2002) [cited 3 September 2002], available at [www.nato.int/docu/basic/b020528e.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/b020528e.htm); INTERNET.

membership that: “Aspirant countries are expected to achieve certain goals in the *political and economic* fields. These include settling any international, ethnic or external territorial disputes by peaceful means; demonstrating a commitment to the rule of law and human rights; establishing democratic control of their armed forces; and promoting stability and well-being through economic liberty, social justice and environmental responsibility.”<sup>286</sup> Therefore the argument follows that Japan should simultaneously promote Russian accession to NATO while requesting the United States to apply pressure to Russia to conclude a peace treaty with Japan that returns the Northern Territories.<sup>287</sup> The reasoning is that only through resolution of the territorial dispute with Japan could Russian integration into NATO provide greater security in the Asian Pacific, otherwise the “U.S. would be in an awkward situation.”<sup>288</sup>

#### **4. No Guarantee**

The three scenarios presented above are not impossible, though the situations may be improbable. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century proved, however, that the world can change faster than the commentators who study it expect. The only thing that is unlikely in Russo-Japanese relations is that the necessary impetus for change would come from within either Russia or Japan. Both states have proven willing to sacrifice greater national interests for the sake of four islands that offer little material value. Russia’s interests have been hurt much more than Japan’s in this regard because, at the present time, Russia needs access to Japanese capital and assistance far more than Japan needs anything from Russia. For Russia to develop its Far Eastern krais, oblasts, and okrugs, it will need assistance beyond that which foreign oil companies will provide to extract Russian oil. However, the possibility remains that, even if the external situation changed in one of the ways listed above, the Russians and Japanese may still defy their own national interests and maintain the dispute.

### **B. IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY**

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<sup>286</sup> *NATO Handbook*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (01 October 2001) [cited 3 September 2002], available at [www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030103.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030103.htm); INTERNET, ch. 3 (emphasis in original).

<sup>287</sup> Researchers from the Russian Studies department at the National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS), interview by author, Ebisu, Tokyo, Japan, 2 July 2002.

<sup>288</sup> NIDS, interview.

The Kurils dispute will either be resolved, or it will remain stalemated. The consequences for regional security of either scenario will be the following:

### **1. Resolution**

Resolution of the dispute, while unlikely, could have a significant effect on regional security. Japan and Russia have a strained relationship because of their failure to resolve this remaining legacy of Stalin's diplomacy. Consequently, cooperation between the two states in North East Asia has remained at a relatively low level compared to Japan's interactions with its other East Asian neighbors, with the possible exception of the DPRK. Japanese businesses have largely kept out of the Russian Far East and the Japanese have provided little in foreign aid. Russia needs Japanese capital to develop its Far East. Currently, the infrastructure in the Russian far eastern provinces is crumbling, the population is declining, and laid-up nuclear submarines remain an environmental and proliferation danger. Without favorable resolution of the Kuril issue, the Japanese are unlikely to provide the capital necessary for development of the Russian Far East. Development of the region, to include increased nuclear waste processing facilities, infrastructure development and increased security around Russia's military sites would provide increased stability in the region through the elimination of proliferation and environmental threats.

Additionally, Russo-Japanese reconciliation could lead to increased cooperation on fisheries, environment, smuggling and organized crime issues that exist in the region. These are factors that have an effect on general "human security," a term Professor Peter Uvin of the Fletcher School at Tufts University defines as "a term [that] bring[s] together the concerns and practices that deal with the many faces of, and close relations between, freedom from fear and freedom from want. Under this rubric fall a broad variety of issues and trends, but they all share a desire to cross boundaries between fields of social change until now usually treated separately, and a strong ultimate focus on the inclusive well-being of all human beings."<sup>289</sup> In this area, increased cooperation between Russia and Japan could yield benefits through the promotion of closer regional integration between Sakhalin, the Russian Far East, Hokkaido, and the Sea of Japan coast of Honshu – all

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<sup>289</sup> Peter Uvin, "About the Institute for Human Security," The Fletcher School at Tufts University [cited 4 September 2002], available at [fletcher.tufts.edu/humansecurity/about.html](http://fletcher.tufts.edu/humansecurity/about.html); INTERNET.

regions that have not benefited substantially from the recent gains in wealth and economic development of East Asia.

Resolution of the territorial issue, however, will not mean alliance. Similarly, Russia still has concerns regarding China despite signing a treaty of friendship that resolved all disputes along their more than 4,300 km long border, with the exception of a small segment measuring approximately 50 kilometers. Russian President Putin has made it clear in candid discussion that the relationship with China does not constitute an alliance.<sup>290</sup> The same would likely be true with Japan, unless the impetus for change was the result of full Russian integration into NATO. Even then, the Russo-Japanese security relationship would probably only be similar to the Korean-Japanese quasi-alliance in which there is a common ally but no common defense structure.

## **2. Non-resolution**

It would be simple to say that barring resolution of the territorial dispute, Russo-Japanese relations and regional security would merely reflect maintenance of the status quo. It is true that the dispute will probably continue for the foreseeable future unless some unexpected major shift occurs in mutual relations, or in the regional security environment. However, allowing the situation to remain in stasis with no final peace treaty or full normalization between Russia and Japan will present problems in the future. When discussing “security,” it must be acknowledged there are many forms of “security.” The likelihood of the Northern Territories dispute provoking an armed clash between Russia and Japan is practically non-existent. It is in the realms of environmental and human security, however, that the lack of normalization will be noticed. Succinctly summing up Japan’s situation, Hasegawa notes that, “Japan’s well-being is integrally bound to the fate of the Russian Far East.”<sup>291</sup>

While both Russian and Japanese fishermen have had at least limited access to the entire Kuril archipelago, including the Northern Territories, the only true beneficiaries of the current situation have been criminals and poachers. The northwest region of the

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<sup>290</sup> “Russia: President Putin Gives News Conference for Domestic, Foreign Press,” trans. FBIS, transcript of live Russian TV *RTR* press conference, 18 July 2001, FBIS Doc. ID CEP20010718000297.

<sup>291</sup> Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Neither War nor Peace, 1985-1998*, vol. 2 of *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 557.



Pacific Ocean is the most active fishery in the world, much of the catch going to feed Japan, and has sustained numerous collapses in the stocks of various fish.<sup>292</sup> Only active management and efficient patrolling will be able to counter the effects poachers have already had in the disputed waters around the Kurils. While some progress has been made in cooperation between the Russian and Japanese Coast Guards, bribes of Russian monitors remain a significant problem.<sup>293</sup>

Finally, no multi-lateral security regime that includes Japan, Russia, China and the United States can ever be implemented as long as the territorial dispute remains and there is no final peace treaty. Again, this does not mean alliance, but rather an OSCE-like body that could provide a forum for regional actors and increase intergovernmental transparency. Asia needs a forum for discussion beyond economic matters, and while the Russo-Japanese rift will not seriously affect bilateral relations beyond a simple lack of improvement, the inability to create more inclusive security frameworks within Asia will remain the primary victim of non-resolution in the Northern Territories dispute.

### **C. “LIKE THE ORBITAL PATH OF HALLEY’S COMET”<sup>294</sup>**

There is still a significant amount of emotional baggage surrounding the territorial dispute that must be resolved. At the outset of my research, I believed that the death of the World War II generation might lessen the emotional ties that prevent resolution of the Northern Territories dispute on both sides. However, a conclusion of my research is that the dispute may long outlive the passing of that generation. In fact, the more I have researched, the more it seems that a more likely resolution may come about because of growing apathy among Japanese or greater economic prosperity in European Russia. The imagery surrounding World War II will endure well beyond the death of the Russians who lived through the period. Because of increasing Japanese apathy, Moscow’s current strategy of delaying any discussion on returning the islands may in the end prove successful in retaining Kunashiri and Etorofu for Russia, though it would be a Pyrrhic

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<sup>292</sup> J.R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 244-251.

<sup>293</sup> Boris Reznik, “Mafia and the Sea,” trans. FBIS, *Izvestia*, 17 July 2002, FBIS Doc ID CEP20020724000354.

<sup>294</sup> Nao Fujita, “Kawaguchi’s Hokkaido Visit Shows Distance Between MOFA, Former Island Residents,” trans. FBIS, *Asahi Shimbun*, 24 August 2002, FBIS Doc ID JPP20020825000050.

victory and would come at great cost to Moscow. If Japan's desires are not satisfied in a peace treaty, then it is doubtful the Japanese will ever significantly invest in the Russian Far East.

While the Northern Territories issue is taught in Japanese schools and the country celebrates "Northern Territories Day" every year on February 7<sup>th</sup>, anecdotal evidence indicates apathy is growing among the younger generation of Japanese, despite the efforts of Japanese semi-governmental organizations such as the Northern Territories Issue Countermeasures Association to keep the issue alive.<sup>295</sup> There are some statistics in Japanese language surveys that indicate the younger generations are more willing to compromise than those who have personal memories of the Second World War.<sup>296</sup> If the purpose of the efforts of groups like the Northern Territories Issue Countermeasures Association is to reduce willingness to compromise among the population, those efforts do not seem to have not been particularly effective. Indeed, growing apathy is recognized by some government-sponsored research.<sup>297</sup>

However, the Japanese government may be reluctant to drop the issue even though it fails to evoke the same passions in future. Rather, the Northern Territorial dispute may become a parochial issue of interest only to those who live in the northern tip of Hokkaido, and nowhere else. This does not necessarily mean the issue will be resolved, because the Northern Territories can be compared to the situation in the United States regarding Cuba policy. U.S. national policy towards Fidel Castro and Cuba is driven by a small, but politically influential group located in and around Miami. The LDP structure is faction driven, and therefore is capable of being held hostage by an influential minority within the party. Indeed, it is factional politics that has held up most Japanese reforms, despite overwhelming public desire for change. Therefore, similar to U.S. Cuba policy, Japanese policy regarding the Northern Territories may not change, no matter what the majority of the Japanese population thinks.

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<sup>295</sup> Yuka Sugiura, conversation with author, 26 August 2002. Ms. Sugiura is a member of the younger generation of Japanese who have grown up learning about the Northern Territories in school. Neither she nor friends that she asked on my behalf believe the issue is important.

<sup>296</sup> Tsuneo Akaha, conversation with author, 13 September 2002.

<sup>297</sup> JIIA, interview; NIDS, interview.

As of September 2002 Russian and Japanese officials are preparing for an October visit to Moscow by Japan's Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi. Negotiations for a peace treaty are, as always, on the agenda, but it is likely that no progress will be made beyond some vague affirmation of the 1993 Tokyo Declaration or the 1956 Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration. Recent statements by Russian and Japanese officials make a stalemate on the issue a forgone conclusion. President Putin stated during a visit to Vladivostok in late August that, "Japan thinks of the Southern Kurils as their territory whereas we call it our territory."<sup>298</sup> On the Japanese side, Foreign Minister Kawaguchi stressed to former residents of the islands and residents of Nemuro in Hokkaido that Japan maintains its policy of seeking the simultaneous return of all four islands.<sup>299</sup> The statements of both Kawaguchi and Putin have likewise been published in news sources in both countries, so at least there should be no unrealistic expectations among the Japanese or Russians regarding the talks. Once again, Russia and Japan will talk, and as usual nothing will happen.

In the end, mutual satisfaction on the Northern Territories issue is probably not possible. Mutual cooperation may increase further, and one day Russia and Japan may finally sign a peace treaty, but barring some unforeseen major event that changes the basis of bilateral relations, it is not likely. No matter the benefits each could receive from solving the dispute, and no matter the increased regional security a final peace treaty will bring, the dispute has become too symbolic an issue and too much national pride has been invested on both sides. An anonymous MOFA official described the situation best: "It would be difficult to settle the territorial issue unless leaders of both countries maintain a stable political base and develop a good relationship with each other. But such a chance does not come so often. It is like the orbital path of Halley's Comet."<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> "Putin Stresses Russian Ownership of Disputed Islands," trans. FBIS, *Tokyo Kyodo* news service, 24 August 2002, FBIS Doc ID JPP20020824000058.

<sup>299</sup> Vladimir Solntsev, "Japan's Kawaguchi Insists on Return of Southern Kurils From Russia," trans. FBIS, *ITAR-TASS* news service, 23 August 2002, FBIS Doc ID CEP20020823000225; Fujita, "Kawaguchi's Visit."

<sup>300</sup> Fujita, "Kawaguchi's Visit."

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